

UNCCD COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2009

On the fourth day of UNCCD COP 9, the CRIC considered reporting guidelines and indicators, following which it convened as a contact group and considered the workplans of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies and collaboration with the GEF. The CST concluded the first UNCCD Scientific Conference, following which they took up the agenda item on the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project. Contact groups on the CST and the JIU assessment of the GM also met.

CRIC

REPORTING GUIDELINES AND INDICATORS: The Secretariat introduced a document on consideration of how best to measure progress on the Strategy's strategic objective 4 on mobilizing resources to support the implementation of the Convention (ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.7). BURKINA FASO suggested that indicator 2 (UNCCD share of bilateral official development assistance) should account for the share of financial commitments at the community scale. The EU and CÔTE D'IVOIRE questioned why the Secretariat and GM are not reporting entities for indicator 6 (number and type of legal and regulatory frameworks or other mechanisms to secure or facilitate transfer of funds). The GAMBIA said means of verification could be elaborated for indicator 7 (entrusting of institutional responsibilities for UNCCD implementation). The EU noted the need to come to a decision on this topic. SAUDI ARABIA suggested improving the document and adopting a decision at COP 10.

Markku Aho, Facilitator of the CRIC contact group, reported on the group's work on 23 September. He introduced the mandate and said participants exchanged views on addressing the four-year workplans linking them with the two-year work programmes.

CRIC CONTACT GROUP: Facilitated by Aho, the contact group reconvened in the plenary hall after the CRIC plenary adjourned, to consider the workplans of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies. Delegates discussed a paper distributed by the Secretariat entitled "Integrated Convention Workplan." One delegate commented that even if performance indicators are fulfilled, the expected accomplishments will not be necessarily met, and suggested to put a note to that effect. Regarding financing and technology transfer, one delegation suggested using the existing platforms as much as possible. Another delegate said the workplan is overly ambitious and prioritization is needed, including avoiding overlap with

other Convention institutions. She also noted that some of the expected accomplishments go beyond the mandate of the Convention.

The CRIC contact group then addressed the workplan of the GM and some delegates made comments on activities that should be tasked to either the Secretariat or GM specifically. Other participants questioned the merits of this discussion, considering that the contact group on the JIU report may decide on a different institutional arrangement.

In the afternoon, the contact group addressed the Joint Workplan of the Secretariat and the GM (ICCD/CRIC(8)/2/Add.2), and delegates were asked to submit written comments. One party emphasized the need to ensure that language in the workplan is consistent with the Convention's mandate, namely to address issues related to drylands. Another party suggested incorporating a qualitative indicator on country parties' satisfaction with the GM on Integrated Financial Strategies. On the CRIC and CST workplans, parties deferred consideration until contact groups on these issues finish their work.

The contact group then addressed the draft decision on the Implementation of the Strategy (L.20/COP.9). Participants suggested amendments to the proposed text on issues including cost efficiency of the workplan, partnerships for advocacy and outreach, development of the next multi-year integrated workplan and coordination between the GM and Secretariat. Participants deferred discussion of sections regarding the CRIC and the GM until inputs from contact groups on these entities finish their work.

On the draft decision related to collaboration with the GEF (L.21/COP.9), one regional group suggested text regarding the GEF's fifth replenishment, related to sufficient and equitable technical and financial assistance for the implementation of the Strategy, particularly in developing countries. Some parties noted that text should reflect that GEF contributors include some developing countries.

SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

Martin Bwalya, NEPAD Secretariat, introduced the session on WGIII's report on "Knowledge management, institutions and economics." Mary Seely, Desert Research Foundation of Namibia, presented on "Vertical and horizontal knowledge management: challenges of people living in drylands." Mark Reed, University of Aberdeen, emphasized the need to build and document existing work and enable land managers to do M&A themselves. In the ensuing discussion, participants emphasized, *inter alia*: that the content of presentations was not always linked to actual needs, and the feasibility of the M&A methodology was

not clear; the need to highlight the role of information handling at the local level and of traditional knowledge and to analyze the pressure of globalization, economics, extractive companies and markets on land degradation and desertification; the role of local producers and other stakeholders in M&A; and that researchers are beginning to be required by funders to communicate their findings to end-users.

Pamela Chasek, Manhattan College/IISD, discussed challenges related to knowledge management at the national and international levels, and described WGIII's recommendations regarding the creation of clearinghouse mechanisms and an independent, multidisciplinary body of scientists to work alongside the CST, and encouraging better knowledge management across MEAs and between their scientific bodies, among others. The UNFCCC and UNEP highlighted opportunities for collaboration, including a 2007 UNFCCC decision on reporting, the recent World Climate Conference-3's discussion of data availability, the Nairobi work programme, a GEF pilot initiative for joint reporting, and the 2010-Biodiversity Indicators Partnership. A participant highlighted the lack of scientific knowledge related to the application of these conventions.

Stefan Sperlich, University of Göttingen, explained the economic processes that cause DLDD and identified ways that policy can intervene to change the processes and yield more sustainable outcomes. Participants inquired: how negative externalities from short-term land leasing can be incorporated into the model; how conflicts can be managed; how the model can internalize global benefits; and whether the models can be used to predict environmental fragility. Sperlich indicated that the models seek to structure the market to avoid land degradation and do not address what to do once it occurs.

Bertus Kruger then presented the recommendations of WGIII. Comments focussed on the creation of a new international body, the need to add socio-economic aspects, and tools for cost-benefit analysis.

Brazil, for the LAC GROUP, said that the document "Report of the UNCCD first Scientific Conference," which contains the Scientific Conference's recommendations, should indicate it is a proposal by the Chair.

Participants considered the recommendations of each WG during an afternoon session moderated by Mahmoud Sohl. Charles Hutchinson, University of Arizona, presented WGI's recommendations, to which participants: requested revising the recommendation on a new scientific body and clarification on the nature, scope and modalities for such a body; urged countries to adopt some of the recommendations hoping this will give more visibility to the Convention; underlined the issue of prior informed consent, indigenous property rights and equitable sharing of benefits of traditional knowledge; and requested a recommendation on efficient use of water resources on arid lands.

Mark Winslow presented nine elements that WGII would incorporate into revisions of its recommendations. Participants: asked what the WG's actionable recommendations were; emphasized interrelationships that should be highlighted, including with sustainable water and basin management; and suggested that scientists should recommend what legislation should be adopted for M&A.

Richard Thomas, United Nations University, presented WGIII's recommendations, and said that if the COP decides to adopt the recommendation on a new independent scientific body, this will be a process rather than an immediate action, but cautioned that, if this process is slowed down by discussions on procedures and rules, scientists might turn away and go on with their own networks.

To the question on how economists could be involved to provide their expertise, Thomas said that a Stern Review type of report is needed for drylands. Participants *inter alia*: said a cost-benefit analysis should consider tangible and intangible values and the costs of inaction; suggested setting up an electronic magazine to disseminate local knowledge; and said extractive companies cause land degradation and international environmental laws have to be considered.

Bertus Kruger presented the summary of the key messages and recommendations. Participants: stressed the importance of land use planning in combating land degradation; underlined strengthening national scientific research; lamented that the recommendations do not provide policy options; mentioned "land grabbing" by private companies as a source of land degradation; recalled that SLM increases farmers' income and soil carbon absorption; highlighted early warning systems and integrated M&A; said the methodology should be clarified; and said the recommendations should not have any prejudice on ongoing activities.

CST 9 Chair Kellner thanked Mark Winslow for leading the DSD Consortium and Scientific Conference Chair Dar and closed the first UNCCD Scientific Conference.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Kellner then convened the CST. The Coordinator of the FAO Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) team introduced the report of progress of the LADA (ICCD/COP(9)/CST/5). PAKISTAN inquired about training and capacity building for countries that wanted assessments. CHINA and SENEGAL discussed their experience with LADA. BOLIVIA asked if there have been analyses about the economic investment required to implement LADA. MEXICO said it would be useful to exchange conclusions regarding the project.

CONTACT GROUP – JIU ASSESSMENT OF THE GM

The contact group reviewed the JIU Assessment Report's five recommendations. Discussions considered the accountability of the GM to the COP including through reporting frequency, content and quality. Several participants favored requiring midterm reports from the GM, although one noted the additional burden this can incur. Many participants also stressed there should be only one report for the Convention's institutions and bodies. Participants' discussed the level of accountability enabled through the hosting arrangement with IFAD. Participants generally agreed that the COP, not the GM, should develop performance indicators, and that this process is already underway. Participants discussed the merits of addressing the JIU report's scenarios, particularly while waiting for legal advice on a GM-Secretariat merger, versus drafting a text related to the five recommendations.

IN THE CORRIDORS

At the conclusion of the first UNCCD Scientific Conference, reactions in the corridors were mixed. Many commented that the room was full for the first time in the history of the CST, and that the level of scientific discussion was higher than in the past. Others were not convinced of its value, however, and questioned whether the process would translate to changes in the implementation of the Convention. Some commented that the conference did not bridge the gap between science and policy in the UNCCD, stating that the scientific information was interesting, but it would be hard to translate the "naïve" recommendations into policy decisions to be taken by the COP. As the Working Groups for the Scientific Conference began working to incorporate the feedback into their recommendations, the CST contact group was reportedly expected to work into the night to develop draft CST decisions, including whether or not to hold a second scientific conference.