

SUMMARY OF THE NINTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 21 SEPTEMBER - 2 OCTOBER 2009

The ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 21 September - 2 October 2009, along with the eighth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 8) and the ninth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 9). This was the first COP following the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan and framework for the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) in 2007, and the 1,700 registered participants in Buenos Aires discussed a number of agenda items related to that decision, including: four-year work plans and two-year work programmes of the CRIC, CST, Global Mechanism (GM) and the Secretariat; the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) assessment of the GM; the terms of reference of the CRIC; the CST's operation; arrangements for regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs); impact indicators and performance indicators; the communication strategy; and the programme and budget.

In support of the strategic plan, the CST convened primarily in a scientific conference format during the first week to discuss "Biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management." On 28-29 September 2009, a high-level segment took place, with over 60 countries participating in three roundtables on global trends of desertification, land degradation and drought, linkages with climate change, and partnerships. An open dialogue session took place with civil society organizations on 1 October 2009.

The COP approved thirty-six decisions before the final gavel came down at 7:50 am on Saturday, 3 October. Delegates highlighted the outcomes of the CST, including the decision identifying impact indicators, as evidence that the decisions taken at COP 8 and the shared vision for the Convention as expressed in the strategic plan could move the UNCCD forward. Decisions asking the Executive Secretary and Managing Director of the GM to support regional coordination mechanisms and to establish the CRIC as a standing subsidiary body also

brought some resolution to long-standing debates within the Convention. Agenda items that have been a source of contention among delegates at many meetings – the GM and the budget – dominated the conference, however. Some had hoped that COP 9's decisions on the GM would lead to a new shared understanding among parties of the structure and mandate of the Convention's bodies, but the polarized positions taken on these issues resulted in a late night impasse and decisions that left their resolution to a future COP, which many thought would dampen their recollections of the blooming spring and memorable images of Buenos Aires.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNCCD

The UNCCD is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation in the drylands. The UNCCD was adopted on 17 June 1994 and entered into force on 26 December 1996. Currently, it has 193 parties. The UNCCD recognizes the physical, biological and socioeconomic aspects of desertification,

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This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Soledad Aguilar, Alexandra Conliffe, Laura Russo, Lynn Wagner, Ph.D., and Kunbao Xia. The Digital Editor is Angeles Estrada. The Editor is Pamela S. Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the United Kingdom (through the Department for International Development – DFID), the Government of the United States of America (through the Department of State Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs), the Government of Canada (through CIDA), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the European Commission (DG-ENV). General Support for the *Bulletin* during 2009 is provided by the Government of Australia, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Ministry of Environment of Sweden, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, SWAN International, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Japanese Ministry of Environment (through the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies - IGES), the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (through the Global Industrial and Social Progress Research Institute - GISPRI), the Government of Iceland, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Funding for translation of the *Bulletin* into Spanish at this meeting has been provided by the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs. Funding for translation of the *Bulletin* into French at this meeting has been provided by the International Organization of the Francophonie (IOF). The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD or other donors. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications with appropriate academic citation. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-646-536-7556 or 300 East 56th St., 11A, New York, New York 10022, United States of America.

the importance of redirecting technology transfer so that it is demand-driven, and the involvement of local communities in combating desertification and land degradation. The core of the UNCCD is the development of national, subregional and regional action programmes by national governments, in cooperation with UN agencies, donors, local communities and NGOs.

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION: In 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, adopted resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD). The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994 and drafted the UNCCD and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. A fifth annex, for Central and Eastern Europe, was adopted during COP 4 in December 2000. Pending the UNCCD's entry into force, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports on urgent actions for Africa and interim measures in other regions, and to prepare for COP 1. The UNCCD entered into force on 26 December 1996.

COPs 1-8: The first COP met in Rome, Italy, from 29 September - 10 October 1997, during which delegates, *inter alia*, selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the UNCCD's Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development as the organization to administer the Convention's Global Mechanism (GM).

COP 2, which met in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 November - 11 December 1998, invited Central and Eastern European countries to submit to COP 3 a draft regional implementation annex. Parties met for COP 3 in Recife, Brazil, from 15-26 November 1999, and approved a long-negotiated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the GM, among other decisions. COP 3 also decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes and to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the UNCCD, among other decisions.

COP 4 convened from 11-22 December 2000, in Bonn, Germany, during which delegates, *inter alia*, adopted the fifth regional Annex for Central and Eastern Europe, began the work of the *ad hoc* working group to review UNCCD implementation, initiated the consideration of modalities for the establishment of the CRIC, and adopted a decision on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support of UNCCD implementation.

COP 5 met from 1-13 October 2001, in Geneva, Switzerland, during which delegates, *inter alia*, established the CRIC, and supported a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

COP 6 met from 25 August - 6 September 2003, in Havana, Cuba. Delegates, *inter alia*, designated the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, decided that a comprehensive review of the Secretariat's activities would be undertaken by the

UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and requested the Secretariat to facilitate a costed feasibility study on all aspects of regional coordination.

COP 7 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17-28 October 2005. Among their decisions, delegates reviewed the implementation of the Convention, developed a MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF, and reviewed the recommendations in the report of the JIU assessment of the Secretariat's activities. Discussion on regional coordination units ended without the adoption of a decision, and an Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group was established to review the JIU report and to develop a draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

COP 8 convened in Madrid, Spain, from 3-14 September 2007, and, *inter alia*, adopted a decision on the ten-year strategic plan (the Strategy). Delegates also requested the JIU to conduct an assessment of the GM for presentation to COP 9. COP 8 delegates did not reach agreement on the programme and budget, however, and an Extraordinary Session of the COP convened at UN Headquarters in New York on 26 November 2007, to conclude this item. The final decision amounted to a 4% euro value growth in the budget for the biennium 2008-2009, with 2.8% to be assessed from all parties and 1.2% to be provided as a voluntary contribution by the Government of Spain.

CST: The Committee on Science and Technology has convened parallel meetings to each COP. At CST 1's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the continuation of the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators, and decided that CST 2 should consider linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. CST 2 established an *ad hoc* panel to follow up its discussion on linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. CST 3 recommended that the COP appoint an *ad hoc* panel on traditional knowledge and an *ad hoc* panel on early warning systems. CST 4 submitted proposals to improve the CST's work, and CST 5 adopted modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, namely through the creation of a Group of Experts. CST 6 continued discussions on improving its efficiency and effectiveness, among other agenda items. CST 7 considered land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation, among other issues. And CST 8 decided to convene future sessions in a conference-style format, which led to the convening of the first UNCCD Scientific Conference at CST 9.

The first Special Session of the CST (CST S-1) convened in Istanbul, Turkey, concurrently with CRIC 7, from 3-14 November 2008. The two-day CST S-1 session considered preparations for CST 9, elements of the Strategy related to the CST, the CST's four-year work plan and two-year costed work programme, and advice to the CRIC on measuring progress on the Strategy's Strategic Objectives.

CRIC: The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) held its first session in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002, during which delegates considered presentations from the five UNCCD regions, and considered information on financial mechanisms in support of the UNCCD's implementation and advice provided by the CST and the GM.

CRIC 2 met concurrently with COP 6 in 2003 to review implementation of the UNCCD and of its institutional arrangements, and review of information on the financing of UNCCD implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions.

CRIC 3 convened from 2-11 May 2005, in Bonn, Germany, and reviewed the implementation of the Convention in Africa, considered issues relating to Convention implementation at the global level, and made recommendations for the future work of the Convention.

CRIC 4 met concurrently with COP 7 in 2005, and considered strengthening Convention implementation in Africa, improving communication and reporting procedures; mobilization of resources for implementation; and collaboration with the GEF.

CRIC 5 convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 12-21 March 2007, to review implementation of the Convention in affected country parties in regions other than Africa. The meeting also addressed how to improve information communication and national reporting and reviewed the 2006 International Year for Deserts and Desertification.

CRIC 6 met concurrently with COP 8 in 2007, and reviewed the roles that developed and developing country parties should play in resource mobilization, and collaboration with the GEF.

CRIC 7 convened in Istanbul, Turkey, from 3-14 November 2008, during which delegates considered: the work plans and programmes for the Convention's bodies; the format of future meetings of the CRIC; and indicators and monitoring of the Strategy and principles for improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports submitted to the COP.

COP 9 REPORT

José Antonio González Martín, Spain's Minister of Environment, Rural and Marine Areas, on behalf of COP 8 President Elena Espinosa Mangana, opened COP 9 on Monday afternoon, 21 September 2009, at the Hilton Buenos Aires. Delegates then elected Homero Bibiloni, Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina, as President of COP 9.

Bibiloni welcomed participants and noted that with a ten-year strategy ahead and a decade of experience, this COP would mark an historic moment to turn to on-the-ground implementation. Sergio La Rocca, Under-Secretary of Planning and Environmental Policy of Argentina, conveyed the personal support of Argentina's President to a positive outcome to the meeting. UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja said COP 9 must advance the the ten-year strategic plan and framework for the implementation of the Convention (Strategy) by creating an improved institutional setting.

Parties were then invited to make statements highlighting their expectations for COP 9. South Africa, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), looked forward to the Global Environment Facility's fifth replenishment (GEF-5). She supported the establishment of regional offices. Sweden, for the European Union (EU), highlighted sustainable land management's vital contribution to mitigating climate change and adapting to its consequences in drylands. Chad, on behalf

of the Africa Group, highlighted the importance of operational complementarity and clarity for the roles of the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism.

Myanmar, for the Asia Group, said national action programmes need to be reoriented with the Strategy and supported a permanent regional office in Asia. Guyana, for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), stressed that the regional implementation annexes are a significant part of the UNCCD, and said his Group would like to make the CRIC a permanent subsidiary body with a specific mandate. Ukraine, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), hoped that COP 9 decisions would optimize the work of the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat, and confirm the role of the CRIC as one of the Convention's permanent subsidiary bodies.

International organizations and UN agencies also made statements. The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the Dryland Science for Development Consortium (DSD) stressed the need for the application of science at local, national, regional and global levels, and sustainable intensification of agricultural production systems. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) highlighted its support of and contribution to dryland development over its 30 years of operation. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) welcomed progress to make the CST more effective. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) stressed the importance of scientific collaboration, joint reporting, holistic approaches to sustainable land management and gender mainstreaming. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat stressed the importance of science to provide a basis for decision making, both for mitigation and adaptation. The Global Mechanism (GM) said the Joint Work Programme between the Secretariat and the GM is growing in substance, quality and quantity, and noted the need for the COP's guidance on the delineation of tasks and roles based on the distinct mandates of the two institutions.

A representative of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) said the bottom-up approach has not materialized, and emphasized the need to involve CSOs in NAP development and implementation. For more detailed coverage of the opening statements, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04220e.html>.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK, AND ACCREDITATION OF OBSERVERS:

COP 9 President Bibiloni then invited delegates to consider the document on adoption of the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(9)/1/Rev.1). Canada, supported by Norway and the US, said the dialogue with CSOs should take place during the first week. The Executive Secretary said CSOs would be able to provide their views on each agenda item. Guyana asked when the election of the CST Chair would be discussed, and Argentina said the CST Chair should be elected during the opening plenary and assume his functions immediately, in accordance with Article 22 of the Rules of Procedure. Belarus and the Asia Group supported electing the CST Chair but suspend the Chair's function until the end of CST 9 so the CST 8 Chair could chair the Scientific Conference. After lengthy debate, delegates deferred adoption of the agenda until Tuesday morning, 22 September, when they adopted it without further discussion.

Delegates also approved the accreditation of NGOs, IGOs and observers (ICCD/COP(9)/16).

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE

PRESIDENT: On Tuesday morning, 22 September, delegates elected the COP 9 Vice-Presidents: Stephen Muwaya (Uganda), Sandjima Dounia (Chad), Xianliang Yi (China), Naser Moghaddasi (Iran), Yuriy Kolmaz (Ukraine), Giergi Kolbin (Georgia), Alejandro Jacques (Mexico), Christine Dawson (US) and Franz Breitwieser (Austria). Delegates elected Klaus Kellner (South Africa) as CST Chair, and Ismail Abdel Galil Hussein (Egypt) as COW Chair. Delegates noted that Israel Torres (Panama) had been elected to chair CRIC 7 and 8.

Delegates then discussed when the new CST Chair would commence his work. The Asia Group, Africa Group and EU, opposed by GRULAC, suggested that the Chair assume his duties on Friday, 25 September, to let the CST 8 Chair preside over the meeting he helped plan. GRULAC said the Rules of Procedure should be observed. Benin said the voice of the majority should be respected, while Morocco said parties should find consensus with an intermediate solution. Benin said more than two-thirds of parties supported maintaining the former Chair, but Argentina emphasized the need to reach consensus, as the COP had never subjected issues to a vote. The Secretary clarified that voting would not be possible since credentials had not yet been adopted. The Africa Group asked why their position was not considered a consensus, but Syria highlighted that “in this Convention we do not vote,” and suggested both Chairs could work together until Friday, 25 September. The President stated that, due to lack of consensus, the new CST Chair should take office immediately and suggested that the outgoing and incoming Chairs should collaborate.

During the two-week session, delegates convened in meetings of the plenary, Committee of the Whole (COW), Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and Committee on Science and Technology (CST). Six contact groups were established to negotiate decisions related to the CRIC, the terms of reference of the CRIC, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) assessment of the Global Mechanism (GM), the regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs), the budget and programme of work, and the CST. This report summarizes the discussions in the plenary, high-level segment and open dialogue session, COW, CRIC, CST and contact groups, as they relate to the decisions adopted by COP 9.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The COW was chaired by Ismail Abdel Galil Hussein (Egypt) and met initially on Tuesday, 22 September, to introduce agenda items, following which draft decisions were developed by four contact groups on: terms of reference of the CRIC (chaired by Markku Aho, Finland); the JIU assessment of the GM (chaired by Maria Mbengashe, South Africa, in the first week and Stephen Muwaya, Uganda, in the second); the regional coordination mechanisms (chaired by Rashmi Sharma, Canada); and the budget and programme of work (chaired first by Makase Nyaphisi, Lesotho, and on the final two days by Sem Shikongo, Namibia).

THE 10-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN AND FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION (2008–2018)

Report on the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention:

On Tuesday, 22 September, the Secretariat presented to the COW documents ICCD/COP(9)/2 and Add.1 on the alignment of action programmes with the Strategy. The EU said his group wished to see how the guidelines would be implemented. Morocco, Guatemala and Costa Rica commented that it is difficult for the guidelines to be applied by regions and countries with different conditions. A draft decision was prepared by the Secretariat. On Friday, 2 October, the COW endorsed the draft decision, which the plenary adopted without amendment.

Final Decision: In the final decision on alignment of action programmes with the Strategy (ICCD/COP(9)/L.1), the COP, *inter alia*, encourages countries and stakeholders to use the Alignment Guidelines as the reference tool in the process of aligning their action programmes with the operational objectives of the Strategy, and urges the GM to financially assist affected country parties in developing integrated investment frameworks in conjunction with the review and alignment process.

Mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention: Mechanisms for regional coordination were discussed on Tuesday, 22 September in the COW, and in a contact group that met from Friday, 25 September, until the closing plenary. A draft decision was agreed in the COW in the early hours of Saturday, 3 October, and was adopted by COP without amendment.

The Secretariat introduced to the COW document ICCD/COP(9)/3 on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention. The EU, Switzerland and Norway supported making use of existing regional coordination mechanisms of other UN agencies rather than creating overlapping structures. Norway, Switzerland and GRULAC opposed decentralizing the functions of the Secretariat to the regions. Japan encouraged maximizing the utility of existing institutions within the existing budget.

Discussions in the contact group oscillated between: the proposal by G-77/China to establish regional coordination mechanisms with two posts from the core budget financed by the Secretariat and the GM, respectively, in each of the regions; and calls by developed countries to ensure non-duplication of work, and prevent the Secretariat from engaging in implementation of the Convention, which they said is the responsibility of parties. The EU also emphasized that no decentralized offices of the Secretariat should be created, and the US made clear that any proposal should be budget neutral.

The G-77/China called for mechanisms that would include regional committees, thematic programme networks and regional coordination units (RCUs). Discussions took place on the costs of relocating personnel, the need for additional office space, and the need to establish further agreements with host institutions for RCUs. Regarding the core tasks of RCMs, delegates agreed that they should support the achievement of the operational objectives for the Strategy. The CEE emphasized that a regional office should also be considered for its region.

Delegates reached agreement on some issues, including that the Executive Secretary and the GM Managing Director should support, as appropriate, the regional annexes in establishing and operating RCMs, ensuring that the work undertaken in order to facilitate regional cooperation does not duplicate the work done by the Secretariat in Bonn. The contact group discussed other issues at length and finally agreed on a draft decision at midnight on Friday, 2 October. The COW endorsed, and the COP plenary adopted, the decision without amendment.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.2), the COP calls upon the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM to strengthen effectiveness and efficiency of regional coordination mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the Convention; and requests them to support RCMs, and, if so requested by the regions, provide one post per region within available resources of the core budget.

The decision further states, *inter alia*, that:

- staff provided by the GM within available resources, should be co-located with posts deployed from the permanent Secretariat in the same host institution or host country;
- the RCMs would utilize, as appropriate, locations and components of the existing RCUs;
- the Executive Secretary will review the current hosting arrangements of existing RCUs and conclude, where appropriate, new memoranda of understanding with host institutions and host countries; and
- one post from the Secretariat is also ensured for CEE countries.

Follow-up on outstanding Joint Inspection Unit

recommendations: On Friday, 25 September, the Secretariat introduced a document on the follow-up to the JIU recommendations (ICCD/COP(9)/4), and specific documents on the issues of civil society participation and the communication strategy.

Revised procedures for the participation of civil society organizations in UNCCD meetings and processes, including clear selection criteria and a mechanism to ensure a balance of participants from different regions: The Secretariat introduced the document on the procedures for the participation of CSOs in the UNCCD meetings and processes (ICCD/COP(9)/4/Add.1). The EU supported, in principle, the proposed procedure, and made recommendations for CSO involvement. Norway said the document lacked some essential elements on how CSOs would participate in UNCCD meetings and Morocco highlighted the importance of establishing criteria for CSO participation. CSOs requested: a more prominent space in the UNCCD process, training new CSO participants, carrying out follow-up activities, and receiving financial support. Argentina stressed gender balance and youth participation, and supported establishing civil society networks. On Saturday, 3 October, the COW endorsed the draft decision, which was adopted without amendment by the COP.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.4), the COP adopted revised procedures for the participation of CSOs in UNCCD meetings and processes. The decision states, *inter alia*, that the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the COP Bureau, should ensure that the programme of work of the COP

includes open-dialogue sessions with civil society during the first week of the COP in order to ensure effectiveness of its input in the deliberations of the COP.

Development and implementation of a comprehensive communication strategy at the international level: The Secretariat presented the document containing the draft communication strategy (ICCD/COP(9)/4/Add.2 and Misc.1). The EU supported giving priority to communication, while Brazil emphasized that the communication strategy must reflect the mandate of the Convention noting this is “not the land convention” but the Convention to Combat Desertification.

The Chair said the communication strategy would be sent to the regional groups for further consideration, and a draft decision was developed based on these submissions. On Saturday, 3 October, the COW agreed on the draft decision, which was adopted by the COP without amendment.

Final Decision: In the final decision on the comprehensive communication strategy (ICCD/COP(9)/L.3) the COP, *inter alia*:

- welcomes the comprehensive communication strategy as an essential tool for supporting the effective implementation of the Strategy;
- invites international organizations in a position to do so to support the activities of affected country parties in implementing the comprehensive communication strategy;
- encourages the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism, in line with their main functions, to actively seek innovative sources of financing; and
- requests the Secretariat to continue building efficient knowledge-management and knowledge-brokering systems to serve as tools of successful implementation of the communications strategy.

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: The programme and budget for the biennium 2010-2011 was addressed in the COW on Tuesday, 22 September 2009, with the Secretariat presenting its programme and budget (ICCD/COP(9)/5 and Add.1, and ICCD/COP(9)/6 and Add.1, 4 and 5), and the GM presenting its own budget (ICCD/COP(9)/5/Add.2). A contact group discussed the draft decision throughout the second week.

In their statements to the COW, Japan and the US expressed concern regarding the budget increase proposed by the Secretariat, particularly given the current financial climate. The US said the budget allocates resources for activities beyond the Convention and Strategy’s mandates.

In the contact group, delegates discussed the 2010-2013 work plan and the 2010-2011 work programme of the Secretariat and GM, and a draft decision on programme and budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

The Secretariat’s proposed budget for 2010-2011 included a 16% increase compared with the budget for the current biennium. Delegates generally agreed that the activities within the budget should be prioritized. One regional group said the level of the budget should meet the needs of priorities and it should be affordable. She also said that the Secretariat should be responsible for the job mandated to it, but not for implementation. She noted several budgeted activities that are the responsibility of the GM. Another regional group said that the sub-programmes are all important for the implementation of the Strategy, and it supported establishing three regional

offices, which should be funded from the core budget. Therefore, this group said, there must be a growth in the budget. Several delegations, however, were of the view that the proposed percentage growth in the Secretariat's budget was too high. Initially, delegates differed on their preferred percentage increase of the budget, varying from 0-21%.

On Friday, 2 October, parties agreed on: an equal increase or decrease of non-staff costs of the Secretariat and GM, and no staff increase in the Secretariat or GM. The group had lengthy discussions on the level of resources, during which various scenarios were proposed, including 5%, 4.29% and 3.36% increase of the parties' contributions to the core budget. By 3:00 am on Saturday, 3 October, delegates reached agreement on a 4.29% increase.

During the closing plenary, President Bibiloni introduced the decision on the programme and budget for the biennium 2011-2012 (ICCD/COP(9)/L.5). The Secretariat made some minor corrections to the document, to complete several figures missing in the version that was circulated. The US reiterated its original preference for a zero growth budget. She said although they would not break consensus, and would strive to keep their contribution at or near the expected level, their actual contribution would be determined by internal budgeting processes. The decision was adopted without further amendment.

Final Decision: The decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.5) contains 25 operative paragraphs, including agreements to, *inter alia*: adopt the work programmes of the Secretariat, GM, CST and CRIC; approve a core budget of €16,364,800 for the biennium 2010-2011; adopt the indicative scale of contributions for 2010-2011; and approve the staffing table for the core budget. It further decides to maintain the level of the working capital reserve at 8.3% of the estimated expenditures, including overhead charges, of the core budget; encourages parties that have still not paid their contributions to the core budget for 2008 and prior years to do so without delay; approves a contingency budget amounting to €1,988,000 for conference servicing, and requests the Executive Secretary to prepare a results-based budget and work programmes for the biennium 2012-2013, including budget scenarios reflecting zero nominal growth and zero real growth.

ASSESSMENT OF THE GM BY THE JIU: On Tuesday, 22 September, Even Fontaine Ortiz, JIU Chair, presented the JIU report on the assessment of the GM (JIU/Rep 2009/4). He said the GM's general performance was good and therefore inspectors focused on the GM-Secretariat relationship. The JIU concluded, *inter alia*, that there is: a poor Joint Programme of Work; poor coordination and unclear mandates; and insufficient synergies between the two institutions and with other UN agencies. He said the report included three scenarios regarding future institutional arrangements: to improve the status quo; to merge the GM under the Secretariat; and to turn the GM into a fund. He said the Convention was not ready for the latter option, which the report did not explore further.

Some parties noted the late dissemination of the JIU report and questioned whether the JIU had followed its original terms of reference. GRULAC said the GM should improve efficiency, transparency and accountability to the COP. Benin, Senegal, and Morocco questioned the JIU's decision to disregard the scenario in which the GM becomes a fund. Norway and Japan asked the

legal implication of a merger. Switzerland, South Africa and the Gambia stressed the importance of taking a decision to address GM-Secretariat coordination.

In the afternoon, Christian Mersmann, GM Managing Director, said the GM supports the JIU's recommendations, and that improving the status quo echoes them. He said that a merger would necessitate reopening the Convention.

After lengthy debate, parties agreed to establish a contact group, which met for the remainder of the two weeks. On Wednesday, 23 September, participants agreed to consider the structure and functioning of the GM. They agreed to address the JIU's five recommendations, issues of concern additional to the recommendations and the JIU's scenarios.

The group's discussions centered largely on reporting lines, accountability, and institutional arrangements. Some participants also sought to include language that would ensure greater accountability of resource mobilization at the country and regional levels and that would ensure that the GM works with countries not "by chance" but according to preferences established by regions.

On reporting, most participants favored requiring midterm reports from the GM, and highlighted the need for a single report for the Convention's institutions and bodies. Parties also agreed that the current reporting lines, by which the GM Managing Director transmits reports to the COP via the IFAD President, require change. They also agreed that changes in reporting would improve the GM's accountability to the COP.

Participants debated the extent to which they should address the JIU report's scenarios, with some cautioning that this debate should not "hijack" progress on the report's other recommendations. The EU stressed the need to wait for legal advice on a GM-Secretariat merger before discussing the scenarios. On Friday, 25 September, the contact group received a copy of a non-paper to the COW containing a legal opinion on the JIU's recommendation to the COP on a GM-Secretariat merger, which was prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the UN Office of Legal Affairs (UNOLA). Participants questioned the legality of a legal opinion contained in a non-paper. The non-paper stated that the GM could be merged with the Secretariat without amending the Convention, as long as unification results in neither body losing its separate and distinct legal identity or its existence. Parties nevertheless questioned whether the Secretariat could legally house the GM and whether it had the capacity to do so. On Thursday, 1 October, the contact group was presented with the UNOLA's response to a request from the EU Presidency for a legal opinion concerning the recommendations of the JIU in its assessment report (ICCD/COP(9)/9/Add.2). The response stated that the UNOLA provides legal opinions only when requested by a "competent organ of the UN," but not to individual members of that organ. However, UNOLA appended the relevant contents of a memorandum, dated 16 September 2009, in which it had responded to related questions posed by the JIU in relation to its assessment.

Discussion of the legal opinions led to several impasses within the group. First, while some parties favored decision text that placed the GM "under the supervision of the Executive Secretary," others said this would require amending the Convention because performing supervisory functions exceeds

the Secretariat's ability to perform "other secretariat functions," as established in Article 23 of the Convention. Second, while parties agreed on the need to adjust reporting lines and accountability, one regional group felt strongly that such changes amounted to institutional reforms, while another group insisted that institutional reforms were possible only if the GM were housed under the Secretariat.

A small group of parties developed compromise text that directs the GM to consult with and solicit the active input of the Facilitation Committee regarding the content of reports to the ordinary sessions of the COP, and directs the GM Managing Director to submit the reports to the UNCCD Executive Secretary for transmission to the COP.

On Friday, 2 October, parties still could not overcome this impasse. While many were of the opinion that they did not possess legal and financial information to choose at this time whether to merge the GM with the Secretariat, the Africa Group insisted this should happen immediately, while the EU refused to include text related to this possibility. Each party refused to accept any compromise text unless their position was adhered to. COP 9 President Bibiloni met individually with several parties and suggested an additional paragraph requesting the COP Bureau to take up unreconciled issues during the intersessional period for adoption at COP 10. Parties agreed to this solution, yet the original hardline negotiating positions resulted in the deletion of the compromise text regarding oversight by the Facilitation Committee on report content as well as two paragraphs requesting the Executive Secretary and Managing Director to improve coordination, communication and collaboration between their institutions, including through regular meetings and quarterly reports to the COP Bureau. The final decision was adopted without amendment, however Switzerland noted its frustration that the decision will not lead to improved relations between the GM and Secretariat.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.6), the COP requests the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM to collaborate to produce, and the Secretariat to transmit to COP, a report containing the total work programme and cost estimate for the biennium and medium-term work programme and plan in order for the COP to provide governance and oversight over the mobilization, allocation and use of voluntary contributions and core resources for the "entire activities" of UNCCD bodies, the GM and the Secretariat. It requests the GM's Managing Director to present his report at each COP session for "scrutiny" by the parties.

The COP further requests, *inter alia*: the GM to: prepare, in consultation with the Secretariat, detailed regional work programmes that reflect the priorities defined by regions; develop criteria and guidelines for the allocation of financial resources from GM funds, keeping in view the balance among and within regional annexes; and submit for consideration at intersessional CRICs a compilation of data on financial resources mobilized and technology transferred, including a minimum set of specified information at the country and regional levels. The decision reiterates the invitation to the Facilitation Committee, as requested by the Strategy, to revise its mandate and adopt a joint work programme.

The COP requests the COP 9 Bureau, together with the GM Managing Director and UNCCD Executive Secretary, taking into account the views of other interested relevant entities, to undertake and supervise an evaluation of existing and potential reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements for the GM and their legal and financial implications, including the possibility to identify a new institution/organization to house the GM. It requests the Bureau to present to COP 10 a report on this evaluation for a decision.

PROMOTION AND STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES:

On Wednesday, 30 September, the Secretariat introduced the document on this topic (ICCD/COP(9)/10 and Add.1). A decision was prepared by the Secretariat and adopted by the COP. The EU recommended making use of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and of the concept of ecosystem services.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.7), the COP, *inter alia*: encourages further cooperation with relevant international bodies on matters pertaining to desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) with respect to Strategy implementation; to work with the secretariats of the UNFCCC and Convention on Biological Diversity through the Joint Liaison Group to harmonize and facilitate parties' reporting requirements; and requests the Secretariat to prepare draft advocacy policy frameworks that advocate on issues such as synergies with climate change adaptation and mitigation and biodiversity of global ecosystems, as related to DLDD.

FOLLOW UP ON THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

On Wednesday, 30 September, the Secretariat introduced the document on "Follow-up on the World Summit on Sustainable Development and outcome of CSD 16 and 17" (ICCD/COP(9)/11). Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General, UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs, highlighted a facilitative process to assist the mobilization of new resources for sustainable forest management that was informally agreed by the UNFF, and said UNCCD parties would be able to benefit from it.

A draft decision prepared by the Secretariat was presented to the final COW plenary. Argentina suggested replacing a reference to "subhumid ecosystems" with "arid, semiarid and dry subhumid ecosystems." The amendment was accepted and the decision endorsed by the COW and adopted by the COP.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.8), the COP takes note of the CSD 16 and CSD 17 reports. It encourages parties to develop national, regional and subregional research centers and networks for the exchange of research, information, traditional and cultural knowledge, and technology concerning dry and sub-humid ecosystems.

OUTSTANDING ITEMS: Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure: On Wednesday, 30 September, the Secretariat introduced the agenda item on rule 47 (voting majority required for the adoption of decisions by the COP) of the Rules of Procedure (ICCD/COP(9)/12). Delegates agreed to defer this issue to COP 10. The COP adopted the decision in this regard.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.9), the COP requests the Secretariat to include consideration of this outstanding rule of procedure in the agenda of COP 10.

Procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation: Document ICCD/COP(9)/13 was prepared for consideration by the COP. On Friday, 2 October, the COP President presented a draft decision on this topic, which was adopted without amendment.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.10), the COP, *inter alia*, decides to reconvene during COP 10 the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts to make recommendations on procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation.

Annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures: Document ICCD/COP(9)/14 was prepared for consideration by the COP on the establishment of annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures. On Friday, 2 October, the COP President presented a draft decision on this topic, which was adopted without amendment.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.11), the COP decides to reconvene during COP 10 the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts to make recommendations on adopting an annex on arbitration and conciliation procedures.

UN DECADE FOR DESERTS: On Wednesday, 30 September, the Secretariat introduced the document on “UN Decade for Deserts and the fight against desertification (2010-2020)” (ICCD/COP(9)/15). Many affected country parties stressed the need to adopt modalities for the implementation of the UN Resolution on the Decade, and requested that the Secretariat take measures to make it operational. Parties also raised the need to better communicate what is being done and to improve data sharing among researchers, meteorologists and land managers. Executive Secretary Gnacadja reported on activities in the work programme related to advocacy and called for clear aims and a focus on results.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.12), the COP recommends to the 64th session of the UN General Assembly to issue a call for implementation of the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification. It invites parties, observers and other relevant stakeholders to organize activities to observe the Decade, and relevant international organizations and developed countries to support events and activities worldwide.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR COP 10: Delegates considered a draft decision prepared by the Secretariat on the programme of work for COP 10 during the closing plenary, and adopted it with a minor correction to the text.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.18) identifies items for COP 10.

ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES OR INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS TO ASSIST THE COP IN REGULARLY REVIEWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION – TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE CRIC: On Tuesday, 22 September, the COW Chair announced that the agenda item on the terms of reference (TOR) of the CRIC would be addressed at the first meeting of the CRIC. The EU stressed that the COW, not the CRIC, should establish the TOR. Executive Secretary Gnacadja clarified that the

CRIC will review its TORs and send its suggestions to the COW for its consideration. The contact group on the TOR of the CRIC was established under the COW and met from Tuesday, 29 September, through Friday, 2 October. The group discussed the mandate and functions of the CRIC and agreed, *inter alia*, to undertake: an assessment of the implementation of the Convention based on information provided by parties and other reporting entities, and on civil society, including the private sector; performance reviews following a results-based management approach and based on the two-year costed work programme; and compile best practices on implementation of the Convention. The group also addressed issues related to the scope of the review process and entities to be included in the review.

On Friday evening, 2 October, the contact group reached agreement on its draft decision, and transmitted it to the COW for approval. The decision was adopted by the COP on Saturday morning, 3 October, without amendment.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L. 22) decides to establish the CRIC as a standing subsidiary body to the COP. It decides furthermore that the COP shall, not later than at its 14th session, review the TOR of the CRIC, its operations and its schedule of meetings and make any necessary modifications, including reconsidering the need for and modalities of the CRIC as a subsidiary body. It also decides to adopt the TOR of the CRIC, as contained in the annex to the decision. The TOR include paragraphs on: mandate and functions, composition, scope of the review process, frequency of sessions, organization of work, nature of the review and methodology, and transparency of work.

REPORT ON THE EIGHTH ROUND TABLE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT: On Wednesday, 30 September a report on the proceedings of a meeting of parliamentarians, held from 24-25 September on the side of COP 9, was presented to the COW, noting the importance of food security for human security and global coordinated solutions.

Final Decision: The COP decided (ICCD/COP(9)/L.15) to take note of the “Declaration of members of parliament on their role in efforts to combat desertification: parliamentary contributions to achieving food security and addressing climate change in the drylands under the current economic crisis,” and decides to include their declaration as an annex to the COP report.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC Chair Israel Torres (Panama) opened CRIC 8 on Wednesday, 23 September. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda (ICCD/CRIC(8)/1). A CRIC contact group developed six draft decisions, which were approved by the CRIC and adopted by the plenary on Saturday, 3 October. During its closing session, the CRIC also nominated and elected by acclamation the following delegates as Vice-Chairs to the Bureau of CRIC 9 and CRIC 10: Bashir Nwer (Libya) for the Africa Group; Romy Montiel Hernández (Cuba) for the Latin America and Caribbean Group; Vladimir Savchenko (Belarus) for the Central and Eastern European Group; and Stefan Schmitz (Germany) for the Western European and Other States Group. The closing plenary elected the new CRIC Chair, Chencho Norbu (Bhutan).

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

STRATEGY: On Wednesday, 23 September, the Secretariat introduced and delegates took note of the Report of the CRIC on its seventh session (ICCD/CRIC(7)/5).

Workplans of the Institutions and Subsidiary Bodies of the Convention: Executive Secretary Gnacadja introduced the documents ICCD/CRIC(8)/2 and Add.1 to Add.4. Several parties noted their general satisfaction with the workplans, but noted that budgetary implications, prioritizing of indicators, and linkages across the different institutions' plans must be considered. GM Managing Director Mersmann presented the four-year workplan for the GM (ICCD/CRIC(8)/2/Add.3).

In a contact group that met throughout the two weeks, delegates discussed a paper distributed by the Secretariat entitled "Integrated Convention Workplan." The group also addressed the workplan of the GM and some delegates made comments on activities that should be tasked to either the Secretariat or GM specifically. Among the issues discussed included participants' suggested amendments on 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. Delegates deleted a reference indicating the Secretariat would strengthen its resource mobilization functions for carrying out its activities "in partnership with the GM."

On Wednesday, 30 September, CRIC Chair Torres invited CRIC delegates to consider the input from the CST on how to best measure progress on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the Strategy, and the Secretariat introduced the agenda item on performance review and assessment of the implementation of the Convention and of the Strategy (ICCD/CRIC(8)/4).

A draft decision on "Implementation of the 10-year strategic plan to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018)," including annexed workplans, was adopted on Saturday, 3 October, in the COP plenary, with the addition of three footnotes read by the Secretariat, noting that the workplans included in the annexes had not been negotiated, except for that of the CST.

Final Decision: The final decision ((ICCD/COP(9)/L.20) requests the CST, CRIC, GM and the Secretariat to utilize the workplans in the annex attached to the decision; requests the CST, CRIC, GM and the Secretariat each to elaborate a multi-year workplan (2012-2015) utilizing and further developing the results based management approach, and the Secretariat to integrate them into a comprehensive multi-year workplan for the Convention, for consideration at COP 10.

COLLABORATION WITH THE GLOBAL

ENVIRONMENT FACILITY: On Wednesday, 23 September, the Secretariat reported on the collaboration between the UNCCD and the GEF (ICCD/CRIC(8)/3 and Add.1). In the afternoon, Mohamed Bakarr, GEF, presented the report on GEF support of the land degradation focal area. He highlighted that GEF-4 had made US\$300 million available for sustainable land management projects, with a focus on Africa. GRULAC said a request should be presented for GEF-5 to support all countries' implementation of the Strategy. The EU welcomed the alignment of the GEF's strategic programme on land degradation with the UNCCD Strategy. The US and Japan highlighted links with adaptation and, with Namibia, congratulated the shorter project

cycle. The GM highlighted its capacity to work with the GEF to leverage co-financing for the implementation of GEF projects in the land degradation focal area.

From 23-29 September, the CRIC contact group discussed a draft decision related to collaboration with the GEF. Delegates discussed the provision in GEF-5 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. Delegates discussed whether to include a reference to deforestation when noting the need for additional GEF resources, but finally agreed to use the name of the GEF focal area for land degradation. Delegates agreed to invite the GEF to include in its reports to the COP an analysis of the activities to combat land degradation funded through the climate change fund; and to consider the GM's strategy to enhance collaboration with the GEF.

Following contact group discussions, a draft decision was forwarded to the COW and adopted on Saturday, 3 October, without amendment. Bolivia asked to state on the record that not all countries wished to express their appreciation to the GEF for its continued support, since many did not receive funds for land degradation.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.21), the COP:

- invites developed country parties and other donors to provide adequate, timely and predictable financial resources for the focal area of land degradation in the fifth replenishment of the GEF;
- invites the GEF to facilitate access by affected country parties, particularly Africa, to the full range of GEF funds available for projects related to land degradation;
- invites the GEF to include in its reports to the COP an analysis of the activities to combat land degradation in drylands that have been funded through the Special Climate Change Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund;
- requests the Executive Secretary to ensure that the two-year joint work programme of the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism gives due attention to coordination with the GEF; and
- requests the GM to finalize its strategy to operationalize its complementary role to the GEF.

REPORTING GUIDELINES AND INDICATORS: The Secretariat introduced the documents on the draft reporting guidelines and performance indicators (ICCD/CRIC(8)/5 and Add.1 to Add.3). Delegates suggested a trial period before the indicators are formally adopted and highlighted the need to simplify them.

The GM introduced a document outlining proposed formats and intended content of a standard financial annex and a programme and project sheet (ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.4), and the Secretariat introduced a document on a common framework for the definition and selection of best practices (ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.5). Delegates stressed the role of the CST in defining and selecting best practices, the role of regional coordination mechanisms and existing thematic networks.

On Thursday, 24 September, 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).

The CRIC contact group discussed a draft decision on improving procedures for communication and quality of the reports submitted to COP to discuss issues of performance and impact indicators. They agreed they would not discuss in detail the impact and performance indicators and to note that these were "provisional." The group agreed on a draft decision, which was endorsed by the COW and adopted by the COP on Saturday, 3 October, with a correction made by the Secretariat in the Title of Annex 1 to read "Provisional set of impact indicators for strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3."

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.24), the COP decides: to adopt provisionally the indicators, methodologies and procedures attached, including their annexes; requests the Secretariat together with the GM to prepare reporting tools for the fourth reporting cycle in 2010; and requests developed country parties and invites international organizations and financial institutions to provide technical and financial assistance to eligible affected country parties in the fourth reporting cycle, in particular those in Africa.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: The Secretariat introduced a document on the Performance review and assessment of the implementation of the Convention and of the Strategy (2008-2018) (ICCD/CRIC(8)/4), highlighting a methodology for performance review and assessment of implementation systems (PRAIS).

On Friday evening, 2 October, the contact group agreed on the final draft decision on the PRAIS, including the contribution of the CST to the work of the CRIC in reviewing the impact indicators. The draft decision was endorsed by the COW and adopted by the COP on Saturday, 3 October, without amendment.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.23) states that the PRAIS consists of the following elements: assessment of implementation of the Convention and the Strategy through the review of information provided by parties and other reporting entities, and information on civil society, including the private sector; performance review of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies following a results based management approach based on reports on the two-year costed work programmes; review and compilation of best practices on the implementation of the Convention; and assessment and monitoring of the performance and effectiveness of the CRIC.

PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE CRIC: Delegates considered the programme of work for the next CRIC session. The COW endorsed a draft decision on Saturday, 3 October, which the COP adopted.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.25), the COP decides that CRIC 9 should review the communication of information according to provisions outlined in decision ICCD/COP(9)/L.22. It also decides to include the following items in the CRIC 9 agenda: assessment of implementation against performance indicators; review of financial flows for the implementation of the Convention against information provided on performance and impact indicators; consideration of best

practices; review of inputs from regional meetings; review of input from the CST; and review of draft modalities, criteria and terms of reference for the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy.

DATE AND VENUE OF CRIC 9: Delegates approved this draft decision on Saturday, 3 October.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.26), the COP decides that CRIC 9 shall be held in Bonn, Germany, in November 2010, in the event that no party makes an offer to host that session.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

CST Chair Klaus Kellner opened CST 9 on Tuesday, 22 September, and said the CST should take into account emerging issues. He proposed permitting CST 8 Chair William Dar (the Philippines) to serve as Chair until Friday, 25 September, but several Latin American parties restated their position that it would be against the Rules of Procedure. CST 9 Chair Kellner said he would chair the meeting in collaboration with CST 8 Chair Dar. A contact group was established, chaired by Lawrence Townley-Smith (Canada), to develop eleven draft decisions, which were adopted by the plenary on Friday, 2 October.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: CST 9 elected Mihajlo Markovic (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Warapon Waramit (Thailand), Cesar Altamirano (Bolivia), and Lawrence Townley-Smith (Canada) as Vice-Chairs for the CST 9 Bureau. Vice-Chair Townley-Smith served as Rapporteur.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: On the provisional agenda (ICCD/COP(9)/CST/1), several parties from GRULAC proposed reducing the duration of the first Scientific Conference to one and one-half days, to permit more time for the CST to consider its recommendations. The Secretary suggested bringing this issue to the CST Bureau's attention, and delegates adopted the provisional agenda and organization of work.

DRAFT WORK PLAN AND PROGRAMME: The Secretariat presented the draft four-year work plan and costed draft two-year work programme for the CST (ICCD/COP(9)/CST/3 and ICCD/COP(9)/5/Add.3). The EU highlighted the need to monitor the results of the Scientific Conference and ensure they are communicated after the event. He said the timing and modality of future Scientific Conferences should be discussed. The CST contact group reviewed the documents and developed inputs to the CRIC and COW discussions of these items.

SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE: The first UNCCD Scientific Conference took place from 22-24 September and was chaired by William Dar, who had overseen its preparations as CST 8 Chair. The conference included keynote speeches and presentations on the outcomes and recommendations of the three White Papers that the Dryland Science for Development Consortium's (DSD) working groups prepared for the Conference, followed by general discussions.

On Tuesday, 22 September, keynote speakers presented on the role of science and technology in combating DLDD in the dry areas, and on desertification assessment and monitoring in Argentina. For more detailed coverage of the keynote speakers' presentations, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04221e.html>.

On Wednesday morning, 23 September, Working Group I reported on monitoring and assessing land rehabilitation. Keynote speakers presented on "Highlights of policy-relevant

aspects” and an “Integrated science-based framework for monitoring and assessing desertification/land degradation processes and drivers.” This working group’s recommendations focused on: establishment of a Global Dryland Observing System (GDOS); integration of human and bio-physical variables; establishment of an independent body to oversee monitoring and assessment (M&A) activities; and development of a cost-benefit analysis framework. Participants remarked on the need to avoid increasing reporting burdens for countries and the poor access to scientific information in developing countries. For more detailed coverage of these presentations, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04222e.html>.

In the afternoon, Working Group II reported on “Understanding desertification and land degradation trends.” Keynote speakers presented on: land-use and land-management change frameworks, scientific methods for M&A of SLM and factors of SLM; the role of geographic information science and technology for M&A of DLDD; indirect methods for M&A of SLM; and key concepts and issues in sustainable land management monitoring and assessment. Participants commented on the working group’s recommendations, highlighting: the importance of M&A by farmers and land users themselves; the difficulty of using indicators to measure changes in the short term; and the need for financial resources to obtain M&A tools. For more detailed coverage of these presentations, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04222e.html>.

On Thursday morning, 24 September, Working Group III reported on “Knowledge management, institutions and economics.” Keynote speakers presented on: vertical and horizontal knowledge management; the need to enable land managers to do M&A themselves; challenges related to knowledge management at the national and international levels; and the economic processes that cause DLDD. Working Group III’s recommendations included the creation of clearinghouse mechanisms, establishing an independent, multidisciplinary body of scientists to work alongside the CST and commissioning of an independent report on the social, economic and environmental costs (both monetary and non-monetary) of DLDD and the benefits that can be obtained by combating desertification. Participants inquired on the creation of a new, independent, international scientific body, and the need to add socioeconomic aspects and tools for cost-benefit analysis. For more detailed coverage of these presentations, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04223e.html>.

Participants considered the recommendations of each working group during the afternoon session, and: stressed the importance of land-use planning in combating land degradation; underlined strengthening national scientific research; lamented that the recommendations emanating from the Scientific Conference did not provide policy options; mentioned “land grabbing” by private companies as a source of land degradation; recalled that SLM increases farmers’ income; highlighted early warning systems and integrated M&A; and said the methodology should be clarified. CST 9 Chair Kellner thanked Mark Winslow for leading the DSD Consortium and Scientific Conference Chair Dar and closed the first UNCCD Scientific Conference. For more detailed coverage of these discussions, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04223e.html>.

OUTCOME OF THE FIRST UNCCD SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE: On Thursday, 24 September, the Secretariat introduced the “Report of the UNCCD first Scientific Conference: Note by the Secretariat” (ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.2). The EU said the first Scientific Conference has provided lessons regarding the selection of the consortium and its work with the Secretariat. He said the next scientific conference should take place in 2012 and focus on an economic assessment of desertification, and a CST special session (CST SS-2) in 2010 should follow-up on the conference and discuss implementation of indicators. Burkina Faso and Argentina emphasized the need to pay attention to regional equity in the preparations for a Second Scientific Conference and Brazil cited the decision from the first special session of the CST calling for geographical balance in the selection of participants. Cuba said recommendations from the Scientific Conference were not directly related to the CST’s agenda because there was not a clear mandate regarding the Conference’s expected outcome. Chile highlighted the IPCC as an example for scientific input. Bolivia said the scientific conclusions should produce solutions with practical applications. The Secretariat introduced a draft decision, which was adopted by the COP on Friday, 2 October.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.37) takes note of the contributions of the first Scientific Conference. It requests the CST Bureau to consult with parties and regional groups to review its outcomes and requests CST SS-2 to consider that review and make recommendations to COP 10. It encourages the scientific community involved with the Conference to publish its findings. The decision also takes note of the contributions of the Conference, as contained in ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.3 (UNCCD first Scientific Conference: Synthesis and recommendations: Note by Secretariat).

LADA: On Thursday, 24 September, the Coordinator of the FAO Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) team introduced the report on progress of the LADA (ICCD/COP (9)/CST/5). Delegates discussed their experiences with the LADA programme and inquired on training and capacity building for countries that wanted assessments. On Friday, 25 September, CST delegates adopted a draft decision on LADA.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.30) notes the cross-fertilization between the CST and the LADA programme, particularly where impact indicators are concerned, and invites the CST, with the support of the Secretariat, to consult with the LADA programme, and to consolidate, in accordance with decision ICCP/COP(9)/L.29, the agreed upon impact indicators related to land degradation, and the related methodologies. It also encourages the CST to develop collaborative regional training activities on land degradation in order to improve capacities for monitoring and assessing the implementation of the Strategy

UNCCD FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME: On Friday, 25 September, the Secretariat introduced and delegates took note of the report on the UNCCD fellowship programme (ICCD/COP (9)/CST/6), and in the afternoon the COP adopted a draft decision on this issue.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.31) requests the Secretariat, under the CST Bureau, to take the necessary actions to further develop the proposal for a revised

UNCCD fellowship programme; and requests the CST Bureau to develop, with the support of the Secretariat, detailed criteria and mechanisms for selection of scientific institutions and fellowship candidates in line with the revised programme.

ROSTER OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS: On Friday, 25 September, the Secretariat introduced and delegates took note of a report on progress on the maintenance the roster of independent experts (ICCD/COP(9)/CST/8), and in the afternoon the COP considered a decision on this issue. Algeria said the current roster should be “thoroughly cleansed” and “completely revised.” The Secretariat said it had been updated the previous month. The COP adopted the decision without amendments.

Final Decision: Final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.32) requests parties, through consultation with their national focal points and, where applicable, with the science and technology correspondents, to update the database and to propose new candidates in order to achieve a better gender balance and representation of all relevant disciplines, and of all individuals with expertise in the field of desertification, and land degradation and drought.

RESHAPING THE OPERATION OF THE CST IN LINE WITH THE STRATEGY: On Friday, 25 September, CST delegates agreed to a decision on this issue.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.27), the COP decides that the UNCCD Second Scientific Conference shall take place in 2012 at a special session of the CST. It also decides that, after the UNCCD Second Scientific Conference, the CST Bureau, in consultation with regional groups, will conduct an assessment on holding the CST Scientific Conference during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the CST to report to the next CST session. It also: notes that the specific thematic topic to be considered by the Second Scientific Conference will be “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas”; requests the Secretariat to organize an in-depth assessment of the organizational process of the first Scientific Conference in consultation with regional groups; and requests the CST Bureau, with the support of the Secretariat to establish TOR and procedures for selection, taking into account the regional balance of a lead institution/consortium.

DATE, VENUE AND PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE SECOND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CST: On Friday, 25 September, CST delegates agreed to a draft decision on this issue, which was adopted by the COP.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.28), the COP agrees that CST SS-2 shall be held in 2010 to address issues associated with the development and implementation of impact indicators related to the measurement of strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the Strategy and to ensure the review of the outcomes of the first Scientific Conference. The COP also decides that CST SS-2 will be held in Bonn in the event that no party makes an offer to host that session and meet the additional financial cost.

ADVICE ON HOW BEST TO MEASURE PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 1, 2 AND 3 OF THE STRATEGY: On Friday, 25 September, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/4, and Leonard Berry, Florida Center for Environmental Studies, presented a

recommended set of indicators. Mali and Nepal said updating baseline data would require considerable resources. Other speakers said a methodology for defining affected areas is needed, and the number of indicators should be reduced. The EU said a roadmap on the use of the indicators should be elaborated. Morocco, Senegal, Costa Rica, Burkina Faso and Uruguay stressed the importance of regional-level indicators, stating that global ones might not be relevant for all countries. Funding and capacity constraints were noted, as was support for adopting the proposed indicators and refining and adapting them regionally. The issue was deferred to the CST contact group, which developed a draft decision that the CST agreed to on Wednesday, 30 September and the COP adopted on Friday, 2 October.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.29) includes 11 operative paragraphs and an annex that identifies indicators for the strategic objectives for reporting. It indicates that two indicators – the proportion of the population in affected areas living above the poverty line and land cover status – are the minimum required subset of impact indicators required for reporting by affected countries beginning in 2012, and that the remaining impact indicators, while recommended, are optional.

PROGRAMME OF WORK OF CST 10: On Wednesday, 30 September, the CST agreed to a decision on this issue, which was adopted by the COP on Friday, 2 October.

Final Decision: The final decision ((ICCD/COP(9)/L.33) identifies two priorities for the CST 10 agenda, namely the development and implementation of impact indicators and implementation of the knowledge management system, as well as ten other items.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR CST: On Wednesday, 30 September, the CST agreed to a decision on this issue, which was adopted by the COP on Friday, 2 October.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.34) contains one operative paragraph, which decides to include on the COP 10 agenda the issue of amending the Rules of Procedure (including Rule 22), with a view to ensure continuity in the CST’s work.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CORRESPONDENTS: On Wednesday, 30 September, the CST agreed to a decision on this issue, which was adopted by the COP on Friday, 2 October. During the final plenary, Burundi suggested indicating that the “quality” of correspondents should be identified along with recommendations for their role and responsibilities. Brazil said the quality of correspondents would be a matter of concern for parties, and delegates adopted the decision as drafted.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.35) requests the CST Bureau to consult with parties and regional groups to develop recommendations on the role and responsibilities of the science and technology correspondents for consideration at CST SS-2 and CST 10, and invites developed country parties, international organizations and relevant stakeholders to provide support for science and technology correspondents at all CST sessions.

MEASURES TO ENABLE THE UNCCD TO BECOME A GLOBAL AUTHORITY ON SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE PERTAINING TO DESERTIFICATION/LAND DEGRADATION AND MITIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF DROUGHT:

On Wednesday, 30 September, the CST considered a draft decision on this issue. The Holy See asked if the assessment would consider models from other Rio Conventions. Brazil said the intention was to seek the right model to engage science in the UNCCD process, and delegates agreed to a decision on this issue, which was adopted by the COP on Friday, 2 October.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.38) contains five operative paragraphs, requesting the CST to assess how to organize international, interdisciplinary scientific advice, taking into account the need to ensure transparency and geographical balance, and describing how the assessment would take place.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

COP 9 President Bibiloni opened the high-level segment on Monday, 28 September, and emphasized that drought, migration and floods cannot wait for negotiations. UNCCD Executive Secretary Gnacadja delivered a message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who noted that DLDD exacerbates poverty and vulnerability to climate change and highlighted how SLM may provide critical contributions to mitigation, and to strengthening resilience, economic development and food security. Regional groups presented their statements. For more detailed coverage, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04225e.html> and <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04226e.html>

ROUND TABLE 1 ON GLOBAL TRENDS OF DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND DROUGHT:

COP 9 President Bibiloni opened the roundtable on “Global trends of desertification, land degradation and drought: liaison with other problems and challenges for decision makers and stakeholders.” Co-Chair Hanny-Sherry Ayttey, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Ghana, recalled the livelihood impacts of DLDD.

Keynote speaker Jerry Lengoasa, Assistant Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), stressed that drought preparedness, early warning systems and knowledge of vulnerability are key elements in national strategies against DLDD. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity, stressed the importance for the three Rio Conventions to work in synergy and Bakary Kante, UNEP, said UNEP has helped the chemical conventions develop synergies and is now targeting conventions related to biodiversity to ensure synergies. Jan McAlpine, Director, UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), mentioned the ongoing collaboration between the UNFF and UNCCD secretariats in addressing information on funding gaps for sustainable forest management in low forest cover countries. Co-Chair Hasan Mahmud, State Minister of Environment and Forest of Bangladesh, said food security, deforestation and DLDD are interlinked processes.

Panama said the GEF should ensure a more equitable distribution of resources among focal areas, countries and regions, while Eritrea noted the UNCCD Secretariat must

ensure that countries have access to resources, knowledge and experiences to implement the Convention. Others called for innovative mechanisms to secure funds.

Regarding scientific input to the UNCCD, several countries stressed coordinated research and science processes, noted the Scientific Conference had been a positive initiative and called for participation of indigenous peoples in conventional science. Argentina prioritized standardizing measurements and unifying methodology in monitoring and assessing desertification, and conducting economic analyses, such as costs of inaction and market distortions by subsidies. Several countries emphasized the need for targeted research, including on factors that lead to land degradation but could be averted by government policy and clear targets to stop DLDD. Several countries called for early warning systems, and emphasized the issue of sand storms.

ROUND TABLE 2 ON DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

Roundtable Co-Chair Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Namibia, opened the roundtable on “Desertification/Land Degradation and Climate Change – What Role for the Land in the Ongoing Negotiations for a New Climate Regime at Copenhagen?” She emphasized that the climate regime creates opportunities for linkages with the UNCCD through rehabilitating degraded land to prevent greenhouse gas emissions while also improving food security. Zafar Adeel, Director of UN University – International Network on Water, Environment and Health, said the UNCCD’s scope should go beyond drylands to address land degradation and its links with development to meet current global challenges and to remain relevant within the UN system.

Several countries made reference to biofuels as an economic opportunity for drylands, and to the possibility of achieving effective synergies when linking mitigation to land use, land-use change and forestry. South Africa emphasized innovative mechanisms of payment for ecosystem services to enhance SLM practices. Mexico discussed a Green Fund that his country has proposed in the climate change talks. IPADE, Spain, highlighted the importance of incorporating input from local communities, and warned that biofuel production threatens biodiversity and food security.

The UNFCCC highlighted that the UN “Delivering as One” for climate change works towards achieving synergies with UNCCD objectives, noting that mitigation actions, if carefully designed, can also enhance resilience and adaptive capacity. Carlos Minc, Brazil’s Environment Minister, said “we are a COP of the poor” and highlighted the opportunity to include soil carbon sequestration in the CDM and to negotiate a specific climate change fund with sufficient funding for adaptation.

ROUND TABLE 3 ON PARTNERSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONS FOR COMBATING DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND DROUGHT:

Co-Chair Asa-Britt Karlsson, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment of Sweden, opened the roundtable on “Partnerships and Institutions for Combating Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought – The Path to Improvement.” She called for a strong UNCCD focus on implementation and integration with other conventions to give substance to the “One UN” concept. Monique Barbut, Chief Executive Officer of the GEF, said combating DLDD must

be done in the context of sustainable development and that under the fifth GEF Replenishment (GEF-5) there will be an increase in resources to combat land degradation. Moderator Carla Del Ponte, Ambassador of Switzerland to Argentina, stressed that GEF resources should strengthen decentralized entities. Many countries called for GEF-5 to increase funding to the land degradation focal area as well as take advantage of opportunities to access the Adaptation Fund.

Many countries highlighted synergies among the Rio Conventions and linkages between DLDD and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Others noted that projects could succeed only by involving all stakeholders.

Israel stressed the importance of an independent science panel to serve the Convention and said carbon sequestration is impossible without biodiversity. Argentina noted any scientific panel linked to the Convention must be intergovernmental to give technical knowledge political shape. France said DLDD has its place in the IPCC and in the future Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Several countries highlighted the importance of mitigation through soil carbon sequestration.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.14), the COP takes note of the Chair's summary report on the Ministerial round tables submitted by the COP 9 President and decides to include the summary as an annex to the COP 9 report.

OPEN DIALOGUE SESSION

This CSO-organized session was held on Thursday, 1 October, and consisted of presentations by CSOs about their organizations' activities.

The moderator of the morning dialogue, Juan Luis Mérega, Fundación del Sur, thanked the few delegates who had come to the session. Presenters discussed the process to make the UNCCD COP carbon neutral and projects benefitting from the resultant carbon footprints; tools and approaches to empower communities; national examples for sustainable agriculture and water use using combined modern science and local technology, and the role of CSOs in this regard; and work to improve community access to improved water services through stakeholder participation. Delegates highlighted, *inter alia*: the value of civil society in building awareness and communication, CSOs' role in developing Integrated Financing Strategies with the GM; the need to hold the CSO Dialogue at a more timely moment at COP 10; ways to scale up community projects; and power conflicts associated with decentralizing irrigation management.

Since the morning session had been delayed for an hour and a half, Nicole Werner, EcoAndina Foundation, moderator of the afternoon session, said CSOs would have appreciated an explanation for the delay. Several participants said the delay provided further reason to host the CSO dialogue during the first week, before contact groups start to meet.

The afternoon session's presenters discussed: awareness raising and communication activities; the impacts of natural disasters and armed conflicts on migration; the plight of women in drylands; and health and desertification issues. Delegates discussed: the usefulness of national awareness-raising activities and how the issues raised could be translated into indicators;

and that rural women are not adequately represented in the Convention. For more detailed coverage of the open dialogue session, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04228e.html>.

CLOSING PLENARY

The COP Plenary convened on Friday, 2 October at 4:30 pm. CST Vice-Chair and Rapporteur Lawrence Townley-Smith presented the draft decisions developed by the CST, which delegates were invited to review and adopt. Delegates adopted eleven decisions. COP 9 President Bibiloni suspended the plenary at 5:00 pm.

The COW convened at 7:30 pm and endorsed several decisions. The meeting was suspended at 8:00 pm due to the circulation of a document on alignment of action programmes with the Strategy, which did not contain the latest draft. The COW reconvened at 12:20 am and endorsed several decisions without amendment. The meeting was suspended at approximately 12:40 am pending the results of contact group deliberations.

The CRIC convened at 2:15 am to adopt the CRIC decisions. CRIC Chair Torres introduced six CRIC draft decisions, which delegates endorsed without amendment. Delegates also elected the four Vice-Chairs for CRIC 9 and 10. Torres thanked all the Parties who participated in the work of the CRIC, and expressed his special thanks to Argentina, Brazil and GRULAC for their support, and closed CRIC 8 at 2:45 am. The COW reconvened at 5:30 am and endorsed a set of decisions, but was suspended pending the arrival of the final document on the budget. While waiting for the document, the COP Plenary reconvened and President Bibiloni presented the CRIC decisions for adoption by the COP. All decisions were adopted without amendment. The decisions emanating from the COW were then presented to the COP and adopted without amendment. Delegates selected the Republic of Korea as the venue for the next COP (ICCD/COP(9)/L.19), and the Republic of Korea thanked parties for choosing his country to host COP 10.

The US stressed its commitment to the Convention, but stated, for the record, their disappointment regarding issues of process at COP 9. They noted that decisions were tabled at the last minute, resulting in a lack of transparency in the review process of those decisions, and said this was an unacceptable precedent for the Convention. The meeting was suspended at 6:20 am.

The COP Plenary reconvened at 6:49 am. Delegates elected Chenchu Norbu (Bhutan) to chair CRIC 9 and CRIC 10. A decision noting with appreciation the declaration of civil society made on behalf of representatives of CSOs attending COP 9 was adopted without amendment (ICCD/COP(9)/L.17).

Delegates then considered the final decision on the programme and budget for the biennium 2011-2012 and a decision on CSO participation. Delegates also adopted, as proposed by the US, an expression of gratitude to the Government of Argentina for hosting COP 9 (ICCD/COP(9)/L.36 Rev.1), and finally adopted the budget decision.

Closing the meeting, Executive Secretary Gnacadja expressed his gratitude to parties for their trust in the Secretariat and GM and thanked President Bibiloni for his personal efforts at COP 9. Several representatives of the regional annexes and parties expressed their gratitude to the host country. The EU lamented that COP 9 did not fully address institutional arrangements and

that the need to address these at COP 10 will deter from attention to implementation. The Asia Group highlighted that the first Scientific Conference raised the imperative of placing SLM on a scientific footing. GRULAC said the results achieved reflected the delicate balance of different party interests, and highlighted that more could have been achieved in areas such as science and technology, institutional arrangements and strengthening RCMs. The Africa Group stressed that they have high expectations regarding the implementation of the Convention and of the COP 9 decisions, noting that the achievements of the COP were not as great as they had hoped. A CSO representative lamented, *inter alia*, the slow progress of the Convention and poor uptake within the Convention of soil carbon sequestration as a strategy to mitigate climate change. He said CSOs will reconsider their participation in the Convention if they continue to be treated as spectators rather than participants.

President Bibiloni said the COP had achieved some progress, but that “we could have gone much further.” He highlighted in particular the strong criticism regarding the functioning of the Convention’s institutions. He gavelled the meeting to a close at 7:50 am.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COP 9

COP 9: A COP OVERSHADOWED BY POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL OBSTACLES

Two years ago in Madrid, the eighth Conference of the Parties adopted the ten-year strategic plan (the Strategy) amid much fanfare that this plan would bring new life into the struggling Convention. Yet COP 9 demonstrated that a significant change in direction achieves little if the house is still divided; the Strategy, it seems, could not overcome the significant institutional and political divisions that the UNCCD has faced since its conception, particularly with regard to the relationship between the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat. Coupled with what many felt to be a poor handling of procedural issues over the two weeks, some participants left Buenos Aires saying that COP 9 is one they hope to forget. Others, however, did recognize that there were some positive aspects of the conference, namely: the first Scientific Conference and development of impact indicators in the Committee on Science and Technology; a budget decision that includes a small increase in funding; enabling the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to become a standing subsidiary body of the COP; the use of the results based management approach in workplans and as the basis for future reporting and assessments; and support for the long-discussed regional coordination mechanisms. This brief analysis provides an overview of the main outcomes and stumbling blocks of COP 9 and their implications for the future of the Convention.

GETTING THE PROCEDURE RIGHT

From the opening plenary meeting and its confusion over the adoption of the agenda and one delegate’s suggestion that the issue be resolved with a vote, to the closing plenary, where final decisions had to be printed twice and still required oral corrections, many participants felt that progress at COP 9 was partially blocked by procedural inefficiencies. Some delegates noted that the Secretariat often seemed confused over the rules of

procedure, for example with voting discouraged in the opening plenary due to credentials being unavailable rather than making reference to the tradition of consensus decision making under the Convention or the fact that Rule 47 on voting majorities had still not been approved by the COP. Others complained that COP 9 lacked leadership and general oversight of the many parallel sessions over the course of the two weeks. Some also noted a certain level of apathy on the part of experienced negotiators, who at times did not take action when procedural issues impeded progress. Yet while these observations are critical, the reality is that even perfect management of the meeting would have had a hard time overcoming the deep divides that resurfaced at COP 9.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Abraham Lincoln once said “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” Parties rely on both the Secretariat and the GM to implement the Convention, yet the analogy described by one – that working with these institutions is like mediating between divorced parents – was a repeated refrain among conflict-weary participants. Recognizing that this relationship helps no one, COP 8 requested an assessment of the Global Mechanism by the UN Joint Inspection Unit, hoping that an independent evaluation could provide a basis for the COP’s effort to resolve the debate over the GM’s role and mandate.

By midnight on the last day of COP 9, it was clear that the JIU assessment had done little to change entrenched positions, and the scene was set for the continuation of what one observer described as “mutually assured destruction strategies.” The gulf between those who favored strengthening the reporting lines and COP oversight of the Global Mechanism and those who favored merging the Global Mechanism into the Secretariat proved to be just too wide. In the end, parties adopted what some had predicted would be the worst possible outcome: delaying decision on this matter until COP 10. While parties adopted a decision that calls for some improvements in reporting lines and accountability, polarized positions and a last-minute effort to arrive at a decision resulted in the deletion of paragraphs that most felt would have increased coordination between the UNCCD Executive Secretary and GM Managing Director, and improved communication on GM-Secretariat coordination with the COP Bureau.

On the final night of COP 9, a seasoned UNCCD delegate recalled that in 1994 the final night of negotiations on finance and the Global Mechanism for the Convention text extended into the early morning hours, and asked why would the discussion be any different in Buenos Aires 15 years later? Although the COP 9 decision on the Global Mechanism was not the last issue under negotiation at COP 9, it did garner the most attention. The different interpretations of the initial compromise – “constructive ambiguity” in the words of the JIU inspector to COP 9 – are just as divisive today.

MOVING TOWARDS THE REGIONS

Delegates in the contact group on regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs) did appear satisfied in having overcome some of their perennial institutional questions regarding the establishment of RCMs. The discussion on RCMs was closely linked to the budget, as the G-77/China originally pursued the establishment of regional offices, served by both the

Secretariat and the GM, to assist in improving regional-level cooperation. From the first contact group meeting, several developed countries expressed concern about the budgetary implications of relocating or hiring new personnel. Additionally, some donors did not want to set a potential precedent that regional decentralization of the Secretariat could create for other conventions, and were adamant in rejecting any language that could imply the Secretariat was being decentralized. Language was thus carefully crafted to prevent the use of words such as “regional office” or “deployment” of personnel. The decision thus refers to the Secretariat and the GM “providing staff” to the regions.

The final decision, while convoluted in its phrasing, achieved a compromise among regional groups’ positions on the necessary level of institutional backing for the establishment of RCMs. It does not, however, establish any full-fledged regional offices with UNCCD resources. Interestingly, the decision clearly states that GM and Secretariat staff provided to the regions should work under the same host entity and in the same country, in a clear effort by countries to encourage these institutions to collaborate with each other.

A RAY OF SUBSTANCE – SCIENCE AND INDICATORS

As called for at COP 8, a new format emerged for the CST: holding the meeting primarily in a scientific conference format, organized with the help of a selected consortium. Assessments of the first scientific-style conference ranged from the positive to the critical. Some felt it represented a “step in the right direction,” although adjustments need to be made prior to the second such conference. Others criticized the preparations for the conference, asserting that there was insufficient participation of scientists from all regions. Still others were concerned that the UNCCD “process is too slow and political,” which might lead scientists to look for other avenues to connect their work with policy makers. The Scientific Conference and the Working Group process that fed into it engaged a large number of scientists globally, and over 120 travelled to Buenos Aires, filling the CST room for the first time in its history. The scientists prepared and presented three White Papers reviewing the relevant literature and proposed a set of policy recommendations. Nevertheless, some scientists in the audience clearly had hoped for more scientific dialogue, while some policy makers had expected the scientists to provide them with concrete policy proposals.

Key lessons that participants emphasized for future conferences included the importance of regional representation at all stages of preparation and execution. The timing of the first Scientific Conference was also highlighted as a significant concern, as delegates had no time to review its proceedings with a view to assessing recommendations and developing related decisions. The CST’s decisions took these concerns on board, scheduling the next scientific conference during the intersessional period, and emphasizing the importance of regional participation. Both scientists and delegates also highlighted the need to include traditional knowledge in conventional science and the positive bridging role that CSOs could play in this regard.

The CST’s decisions also set in place a process through which it could identify lessons learned from the first Scientific Conference, and examine additional structures through which to bring scientific advice into the Convention. Those who saw the first Scientific Conference as a step forward thought the process set in place through its decisions could yield additional progress towards enhancing the role of science in the convention. Yet others did not embrace the recommendation to establish an independent body of scientific experts on desertification, land degradation and drought. Some indicated a more immediate approach would be to see whether DLDD issues could be incorporated into the scientific body under discussion at the second Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder meeting on an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Interface on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services or the special report on extreme events under preparation by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Another key outcome from the COP in Buenos Aires was the identification of performance and impact indicators, as called for in the Strategy, to guide the UNCCD parties in monitoring implementation. Participants highlighted that the meeting delivered as requested, to a point. Although labeled “provisional,” delegates identified two required impact indicators along with several optional ones, and similarly qualified their identification of performance indicators. Participants expressed cautious optimism about this outcome, given the inability to reach a consensus on these issues in the past. While recognizing this was a political accomplishment, enthusiasm was tempered by absence of an accompanying methodology and data collection strategy.

INTO WHAT FUTURE?

Despite the cautious optimism during the first week of COP 9 that the Strategy could deliver a more robust response to the challenge of desertification, the tensions and debates over institutional issues put a damper on the meeting. No clear consensus or vision emerged from COP 9 as to what the UNCCD’s role is as the Convention enters its second decade, and in light of the increasing challenges placed on land and food security, and by climate change. Observers agreed with the JIU report on at least one point: that the tension among delegates stems in part from disagreement on whether the UNCCD is an environment or development convention. Another underlying tension that remains unresolved is whether it should seek a global mandate to address land degradation or keep its focus on arid lands and Africa. Until participants have a shared approach, and until institutions within the Convention can devote 100% of their time to issues that are relevant to the objectives of the Convention, its impacts will remain elusive, and other fora or institutions will end up leading the fight against desertification.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

SECOND AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MEETING ON AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (IPBES II): This meeting will convene at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 5-9 October 2009. The aim

of the meeting is to agree on a path to strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services. For more information, contact: UNEP Secretariat; tel: +254-20-762-5135; fax: +254-20-762-3926; e-mail: ipbes.unep@unep.org; internet: <http://ipbes.net>

SEVENTH WORLD FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: OUAGADOUGOU 2009: This meeting will convene from 8-13 October 2009, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The theme for this conference is "Climate Change, Mobility and Sustainable Prospects of Development." For more information, contact: Louis Blanc Traore, Ministry of Environment; tel: +226-5031-3166; fax: +226-5030 6491; e-mail: lbtraore@yahoo.fr; internet: http://www.fmdd.fr/english_version.html

UNFCCC TECHNICAL WORKSHOP UNDER THE NAIROBI WORK PROGRAMME: This meeting will convene from 12-14 October, 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting will seek to share information on approaches to and experiences in integrating and expanding adaptation planning and action at national, sub-national, community and local levels and views on lessons learned, good practices, gaps, needs, barriers and constraints to adaptation. For more information, contact: UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; internet: <http://unfccc.int/>

13TH WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS: This meeting will take place from 18-23 October 2009, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The meeting's focus is "Forests in development: a vital balance," and will have a day devoted to "Forests and climate change: to Copenhagen and beyond." For more information, contact: Leopold Martes, Secretary-General of World Forestry Congress; tel: +54-11-4349-2104; e-mail: lmontes@cfm2009.org; internet: <http://www.cfm2009.org>

31ST SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE: This meeting will convene from 26-29 October 2009, in Bali, Indonesia. Prior to the meeting, Working Groups I, II and III will approve their respective outlines for the Fifth Assessment Report. For more information, contact: the IPCC Secretariat; tel: +41-22-730-8208; fax: +41-22-730-8025; e-mail: ipcc-sec@wmo.int; internet: <http://www.ipcc.ch>

THIRD GLOBAL FORUM ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT (GFMD): This meeting will take place from 2-5 November 2009, in Athens, Greece. The Civil Society Days will take place from 2-3 November, and the intergovernmental meeting will take place on 4-5 November. The forum will discuss the global implications of international migration and the mutually beneficial interaction between migration and development. For more information, contact: Secretariat; tel: +30-213-214-2400; fax: +30-213-214-2439; e-mail: info@gfmdathens2009.org; internet: <http://www.gfmdathens2009.org/>

SEVENTH SESSION OF AFRICAN MINISTERS' COUNCIL ON WATER (AMCOW) and SECOND AFRICA WATER WEEK: The meeting will take place from 9-13 November 2009, in Johannesburg, South Africa. Its main theme is "carrying forward the commitments of Sharm El Sheik on water and sanitation: sprint to the finish." For more information, contact: Mohale Mopai, Department of Water and Environmental

Affairs, South Africa; tel: +27-12 336 8741 e-mail: mopaim@dwaf.gov.za; internet: <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/aww/registration.asp>

GEF COUNCIL MEETING: This meeting will take place from 10-13 November 2009, in Washington, DC, US. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council Meeting will develop, adopt and evaluate GEF programmes. For more information, contact: GEF Secretariat; tel: +1-202-473-0508; fax: +1-202-522-3240/3245; e-mail: secretariat@thegef.org; internet: <http://www.thegef.org/>

45TH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER COUNCIL (ITTC): ITTC 45 and associated sessions of the four committees are scheduled to take place from 9-14 November 2009, in Yokohama, Japan. For more information, contact: ITTO, tel: +81-45-223-1110; fax: +81-45-223-1111; e-mail: itto@itto.or.jp; internet: <http://www.itto.int>

SEVENTH WORLD FORUM OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PARIS 2009: This conference will take place from 19-20 November 2009, in Paris, France. The theme is "The new world order: after Kyoto and before Copenhagen." For more information, contact: Passages-ADAPes; tel: +33 01 43 25 62 57; fax: +33 01 43 25 63 65; e-mail: adapes@club-internet.fr; internet: http://www.fmdd.fr/english_version.html

FIFTEENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND FIFTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL (UNFCCC COP 15 AND KYOTO PROTOCOL COP/MOP 5): These meetings are scheduled to take place from 7-18 December 2009, in Copenhagen, Denmark. These meetings will coincide with the 31st meetings of the UNFCCC's subsidiary bodies. Under the "roadmap" agreed at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007, COP 15 and COP/MOP 5 are expected to finalize an agreement on a framework for combating climate change post-2012. For more information, contact: UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; internet: <http://unfccc.int/>

17TH SESSION OF THE AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION: The meeting will take place from 22-26 February 2010, in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. This meeting will address: forestry and wildlife in support of sustainable livelihood systems in Africa; sustainable management and benefits; climate change, forests and wildlife in Africa; and other regional issues. For more information, contact: Foday Bojang, FAO Regional Office for Africa; tel: +233-21-7010-930 Ext. 3202; fax: +233-21-668-427 or +233-21-7010-943; e-mail: Foday.bojang@fao.org; internet: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/afwc/en/>

FOURTH GEF ASSEMBLY: This meeting will take place from 24-28 May 2010, in Punta del Este, Uruguay. The Assembly is the governing body of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), in which representatives of 177 member countries participate. It is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the GEF's general policies, the operation of the GEF, and its membership. The Assembly is also responsible for considering and approving proposed amendments to the Instrument, the set of rules by which the GEF operates. For more

information, contact: GEF Secretariat; tel: +1-202-473-0508; fax: +1-202-522-3240/3245; e-mail: secretariat@thegef.org; internet: <http://www.thegef.org/>

FIFTH MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY (BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL COP/MOP 5): The meeting will convene from 11-15 October 2010, in Nagoya, Japan. The meeting is expected to adopt rules and procedures on liability and redress in the context of Article 27 of the Protocol. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@cbd.int; internet: <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

TENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD COP 10): This meeting will be held from 18-29 October 2010, in Nagoya, Japan. COP 10 is expected to: assess achievement of the 2010 target to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss; adopt an international ABS regime; adopt an instrument on liability and redress in the context of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; and celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity 2010. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@cbd.int; internet: <http://www.cbd.int/meetings>

UNCCD CRIC 9 and CST SS-2: These meetings are expected to take place in November 2010 in Bonn, Germany, unless another party offers to host the meeting. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; internet: <http://www.unccd.int/>

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DRYLANDS, DESERTS AND DESERTIFICATION: This meeting will take place from 8-11 November 2010, in Sede Boqer Campus, Ben Gurion University, Israel. The meeting will address the restoration of degraded drylands. For more information, contact: Dorit Korine, Conference Coordinator; tel: +972-8-659-6781; fax: +972-8-659-6722; e-mail: desertification@bgu.ac.il; internet: <http://cmsprod.bgu.ac.il/Eng/Units/bidr/desertification2008/>

NINTH SESSION OF THE UN FORUM ON FORESTS (UNFF 9): This meeting is scheduled to take place from 24 January - 4 February 2011, at UN Headquarters in New York. The theme for UNFF 9 is "Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication." UNFF 9 is also expected to complete consideration of the means of implementation for sustainable forest management. For more information, contact the UNFF Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-3401; fax: +1-917-367-3186; e-mail: unff@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/>

UNCCD COP 10: This meeting is expected to convene in October 2011 in Changwon City, Gyeongnam Province, Republic of Korea. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; internet: <http://www.unccd.int/>

GLOSSARY

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
COP	Conference of the Parties
COW	Committee of the Whole
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
DLDD	Desertification, land degradation and drought
DSD	Dryland Science for Development Consortium
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INCD	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat Desertification
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LADA	Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
M&A	Monitoring and assessment
NAP	National Action Programme
PRAIS	Performance review and assessment of implementation systems
RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
SLM	Sustainable land management
Strategy	Ten-year Strategic Plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018)
TOR	Terms of reference
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
UNOLA	UN Office of Legal Affairs