

UNCCD COP 10 HIGHLIGHTS FRIDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2011

UNCCD COP 10 delegates conducted an open dialogue with CSOs focused on “Sustainable land management technologies including adaptation and resilience” during the morning. In the afternoon, the COW discussed the budget, the communication strategy and regional coordination mechanisms, following which the Plenary adopted the CST’s recommendations. Contact groups convened in the evening.

PLENARY

COP 10 President Lee opened the Plenary and delegates elected Yves Guinand (Switzerland) as a COP 10 Vice-President from the Western European and Others Group, and Peter Molnar (Hungary) as Rapporteur.

OPEN DIALOGUE WITH CSOs: President Lee then opened consideration of agenda item 12 on inclusion of activities of NGOs within the official programme of work of the COP. Executive Secretary Gnacadja thanked the EU and the Governments of the Republic of Korea, Finland, Spain and Switzerland for supporting CSO participation at COP 10.

Introducing the panelists, Emmanuel Seck, ENDA Tiers Monde, Senegal, lauded the Convention for promoting “environmental democracy” and urged parties to strengthen documentation and sharing of practical experiences in combating DLDD.

Jaekwang Ko, Korea CSO Network, presented on SLM best practices in East Asia. Noting that desertification affects “non-affected” countries, he described ongoing projects in Mongolia, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and China and noted that cooperation on local-level reforestation and capacity-building offers a model for combating desertification and fostering peace in the region. Halima Slimani, Mouvement écologique, Algeria, highlighted lessons from a project to regenerate the steppe zone in the South Oran region by rehabilitation of the alpha plant. Referring to similar initiatives in Tanzania, Congo and Mauritius, she called on COP 10 to support the compilation of an inventory of drought resistant plants to scale up SLM in drylands and enhance the role of science in DLDD.

Cecilia Leal, Fundación Oasis de Vida, Colombia, presented the alternative agro-forestry projects her organization has implemented in arid areas of Colombia. She highlighted the importance of involving local communities, providing technical assistance and training, raising awareness, and improving people’s livelihood. Maria Bivol, NGO BIOS, Moldova, presented a study done in 2011 by NGO AGREX and BIOS on the gender aspects of SLM. She called for greater gender equality and better opportunities for women, youth and children in SLM.

Celia Barbero, Fundación IPADE, Spain suggested establishing an intergovernmental panel on desertification, and urged that desertification be put on an equal footing with biodiversity and climate change. She also introduced initiatives and projects in SLM her organization has implemented. Subrata Bhattacharyya, Gramin Vikas Trust, India, presented on best practices for SLM in India, highlighting integrated farming systems for enhancing sustainable livelihoods.

In the discussion, moderated by COP 10 Vice-President Sonia María González Molina (Peru), ALGERIA stressed the role of CSOs in local development and in awareness-raising about the dangers of inaction. The PHILIPPINES emphasized avoiding overlaps between CSOs. JORDAN underscored the work of CSOs in situations of conflicting uses of resources, such as scarce water in arid lands. GUINEA and others underscored that CSOs are indispensable stakeholders in combating desertification. Costa Rica, on behalf of GRULAC, and the CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC encouraged strengthening linkages between NFPs and CSOs.

SENEGAL highlighted the role of CSOs in addressing questions of equity, particularly regarding women and youth. ARGENTINA said the presentations highlighted the need for preventative action and an inclusive approach, and pointed to fair trade as a tool to prevent land degradation. INDIA underlined “upscaling” of micro-level initiatives. FINLAND asked how CSOs would disseminate their experiences. Voicing support for SLM initiatives, SOUTH AFRICA noted the challenge of determining their economic value. The US sought more information on approaches for enhancing research-practice linkages. TURKMENISTAN asked about incentives that have been used in other projects to engage local people in SLM activities. AUSTRALIA lauded the contribution by CSOs in iterative policymaking in her country, citing their calls for an integrated approach to water and land management. Byong Hyon Kwon, Future Forest, Republic of Korea, highlighted the launch of a global CSO alliance to strengthen coordinated action. Moderator Seck concluded the session, urging COP 10 to adopt a favourable decision on revised procedures for the participation of CSOs in the Convention.

REVIEW OF CST RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COP: On Friday evening, the Plenary, chaired by COP Vice-President Rathore, considered nine draft decisions recommended by the CST and introduced by CST Chair Magalhães (ICCD/COP(10)/CST/L.1-5, 6/Rev.1, 7-9).

BOLIVIA made several statements to be included in the COP 10 report. She noted that the report on the refinement of the set of impact indicators on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 (ICCD/COP(10)/CST/2) should not be included as an annex to ICCD/COP(10)/CST/L.1, as limited time prevented the CST from negotiating its contents and scope. She said negotiating sessions

should not be held in parallel with meetings to adopt decisions and that the Secretariat should ensure there is representation of all regions when adopting decisions. JORDAN also pointed to the challenges for small delegations in participating in parallel sessions. ARGENTINA asked the Secretariat to read aloud all decisions, because written translations were not available.

On a UNCCD fellowship programme (ICCD/COP(10)/CST/L.4), TANZANIA added a reference to future, along with current, needs of parties. JORDAN added reference to “regional” alongside national and international institutions. On the date, venue and programme of work of CST S-3 (ICCD/COP(10)/CST/L.6/Rev.1), ARGENTINA asked for clarification on its implications for the timing of the 2nd Scientific Conference in relation to CST S-3 and CRIC 11, and emphasized the need to ensure sufficient time for the CST to consider the recommendations from the Scientific Conference. On measures to enable the UNCCD to become a global authority on scientific and technical DLDD knowledge (ICCD/COP(10)/CST/L.9), CANADA added a paragraph inviting voluntary contributions to support the *ad hoc* working group.

With these amendments and several technical corrections, the COP adopted the nine decisions (ICCD/COP(10)/CST/L.1-5, 6/Rev.1, 7-9). ARGENTINA acknowledged the efforts of the CST Chair, and delegates gave him a round of applause.

Vice-President Rathore announced, and delegates agreed to, the creation of a COW contact group.

COW

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: COW Chair Brown (Jamaica) introduced resumed discussion on the programme and budget, with documents for the biennium 2012–2013 (ICCD/COP(10)/7-9) and on the financial performance for the Convention trust funds (ICCD/COP(10)/10-20). GM Managing Director Mersmann introduced the report on the implementation of the costed two-year work programme of the GM (2010–2011) (ICCD/COP(10)/15).

ALGERIA requested clarification on the geographic distribution of expenditures. JAPAN called for a budget based on zero nominal growth. GUYANA asked for clarification of several budgetary items that had changed significantly between the current and upcoming biennium. SWAZILAND suggested that budget negotiations should focus on desired outcomes, and then look at specific required financial increases.

The EU urged that the Convention bodies should, in future reporting cycles, provide a joint presentation on their multi-annual programmes. She stressed the need to reassess the added value of all budget lines, and noted with concern that, in case of limited funds, the draft budget would cut funding for science and technology. The US noted that her country has adopted a no-growth policy and encouraged the Secretariat to implement the Secretary-General’s call for a 3% budget cut by UN bodies.

CHAD asked for clarification on the GM’s expenditure for Africa, which was reported at 50% of its budget. Following Managing Director Mersmann’s request for time to compile a detailed response, COW President Brown suspended discussion on this item.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: The Secretariat provided an overview of progress in implementing the comprehensive communication strategy (ICCD/COP(10)/2).

Several parties commended the Secretariat’s efforts to raise awareness on DLDD. ARGENTINA suggested fine tuning the message to focus on vulnerability and SLM of drylands. JORDAN and MEXICO called for training of local media organizations to help amplify the message. KYRGYZSTAN and MOROCCO called for translation of the UN website and awareness materials into Russian and Arabic, respectively. SAINT LUCIA proposed focusing on the nexus between the three Rio Conventions and land management for water quality. GUINEA BISSAU highlighted the role of regional centers of excellence and, supported by MOROCCO, requested the Secretariat to ensure timely dissemination of materials for the annual World Day to Combat Desertification.

REGIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS (RCMs):

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(10)/21, on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention.

The AFRICAN GROUP recommended: strengthening the regional consultative committee; building capacity of the regional coordination units (RCUs); and developing mechanisms for resource mobilization for implementation at the regional level. The EU recognized efforts by RCMs, and expressed concern over the lack of implementation at regional and sub-regional levels. Costa Rica, for GRULAC, highlighted the importance of consolidating RCMs through regional consultative committees, and, with CHINA, noted the need for the RCUs to have a budget. CHINA and SWAZILAND stressed the importance of giving the RCUs a mandate.

UKRAINE called on the Secretariat and the GM to further strengthen the RCU for Central and Eastern European States based on regional priorities. GRENADA said the subregional coordination mechanism will be hosted by the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development. INDIA stressed looking into suitable institutional options for RCMs. EQUATORIAL GUINEA and BANGLADESH stressed coherence of RCMs with the Thematic Programme Networks. ETHIOPIA emphasized strengthening RCM linkages with regional and subregional organizations. MOROCCO said RCUs should not have to rely on voluntary contributions.

CONTACT GROUPS

WORKPLANS AND BUDGET: The group agreed on a draft decision on the multi-year workplans of the Convention’s institutions and subsidiary bodies. The Secretariat then distributed a draft decision on programme and budget for the biennium 2012–2013 for negotiation. Co-facilitator Thomas Heimgartner suggested discussing the three scenarios (9.6% increase, zero nominal and zero real growth) contained in ICCD/COP(10)/8, for which delegates expressed different preferences. The group will continue on Sunday.

ITERATIVE PROCESS: This group finalized negotiations on the decision relating to assessment of the Convention against performance indicators. They also considered a draft decision on improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP, and will reconvene on Sunday.

GM: Different regional groups presented their proposals for the governance structure for the Convention, but owing to time constraints, more substantive discussions were deferred to a further meeting on Sunday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Despite having already spent many late nights in contact groups and the CST not concluding until midnight on Thursday, the conference center was busy on Friday morning as delegates gathered for the open dialogue session with CSOs. In contrast to COP 9, when CSO consultations were sidelined to the penultimate day, some remarked that the substantive interventions and questions following the presentations reflected a genuine appreciation of CSOs’ “added value” for boosting the implementation of the Convention.

As many delegates expected, comments in the COW on the budget revealed tensions between the need for austerity measures in the current economic climate and adequate funding to meet the aims of the UNCCD. With several discussions deferred to the contact group on the budget, some delegates put away their guidebooks, acknowledging that their chance to explore Changwon’s sights would be limited by contact group sessions on Sunday afternoon.