

UNCCD COP 10 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2011

UNCCD COP 10 delegates offered regional group positions in the morning and heard statements from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, ministers and other dignitaries, and video messages from the UN Secretary-General and the Prince of Wales in the afternoon on the first day of the high-level segment. They also participated in two roundtables, which focused on the topics “Desertification, land degradation and drought and food security: Preserving the resource base for our food security” and “The UNCCD in the context of Rio+20: Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought as a cornerstone of the Green Economy.” Presentations at the Rio Conventions Pavilion focused on the theme “Gender and the Rio Conventions.” Side events, the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum, and contact groups also took place during the day.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

UNCCD COP 10 President Don Koo Lee opened the high-level segment and, calling attention to the Changwon Initiative as a “new landmark” in the UNCCD process, said the Initiative could be part of a mechanism to build a land degradation-neutral world. Recalling the work of the CST last week, and outlining the aims of the upcoming week in the CRIC, Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary, reminded participants of the expectation that COP 10 would agree on messages to convey to Rio+20.

Regional group representatives then presented statements. Algeria, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, underscored the urgency of food security and combating DLDD, and highlighted projections that Africa could lose two-thirds of its arable land by 2025 if urgent action is not taken. He called for, *inter alia*: strengthened institutional coherence; support for the Secretariat’s budget proposal; adequate funding for the implementation of action plans for DLDD; and support for the Changwon Initiative. Iran, on behalf of ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, requested the GEF to further support the implementation of the Convention, and urged united governance for the Convention, while maintaining the mandate of the GM. Cuba, for GRULAC, stressed the importance of strengthening regional coordination mechanisms, financing and GEF support, and data processing and treatment.

Poland, for the EU and its member States, noted the decision to establish an *ad hoc* expert working group to discuss options for providing scientific advice, invited the Secretariat to

improve mechanisms to share best practices, and supported the International Economics of Land Degradation Initiative and Changwon Initiative. Moldova, for the CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES, highlighted the need for: simplifying procedures for accessing GEF resources and more GEF funding for DLDD; creating an intergovernmental platform for scientific advice; and strengthening cooperation at the regional level. He supported the Changwon Initiative.

ROUNDTABLE ON FOOD SECURITY: COP 10 President Lee opened the roundtable, referring to ICCD/COP(10)/INF.8 and emphasizing: long-term sustainable agricultural development; improving land productivity; formulating policies and legal frameworks for SLM; and achieving food security through synergistic programmes for SLM. Roundtable Co-chair Rachid Benaissa, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Algeria, underscored the need to preserve soil for food security and the increased recognition of land degradation as a global problem. Roundtable Moderator Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), underscored the importance of biodiversity for food security. Dennis Garrity, UNCCD Drylands Ambassador, gave a keynote presentation on “Land regeneration: the key to ending hunger,” in which he presented agroforestry case studies and benefits.

Speaking for the West Africa region, Jean Koulidiati, Minister of the Environment, Sustainable Development and Water Resources, Burkina Faso, highlighted policy and legislative frameworks for SLM, including the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the TerrAfrica initiative. Noting that “when the drumbeat changes, the dance must change,” he called for increased synergies with the Rio+20 process. Douglas Gardner, Deputy Assistant Administrator, UNDP, cited the multi-agency Horn of Africa programme as a good example of scalable humanitarian intervention that also addresses the underlying issues of food insecurity in drylands. He highlighted “land grabbing” either by local elites or external investors as a critical issue.

In the ensuing discussion, Ministers and other officials commented on the need for effective international cooperation, political will and strengthened regional coordination. Some pointed to challenges such as: land tenure; market access; and land salinization. Others provided country examples of success in combating desertification. UNCCD support to the Nairobi Action Plan, developed in September 2011 in response to the

drought and famine crisis in the Horn of Africa, was proposed, as were efforts to make COP 10 decisions more relevant to real issues.

OFFICIAL OPENING OF HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT:

In the afternoon, after COP 10 President Lee formally opened the event, delegates watched a film on desertification and the importance of forests in combating desertification. Dancers, artists and a children's choir, joined by Korean actress and Honorary Ambassador of COP 10 Bo Young Lee, then presented cultural performances focused on the COP 10 theme, "Care for Land, Land for Life."

Participants viewed a video message from His Royal Highness Charles, the Prince of Wales, in which he encouraged delegates to consider how the UNCCD could better gather and disseminate scientific information on natural resource depletion and DLDD. COP 10 President Lee said SLM, guided by a green growth paradigm, is needed to reverse land degradation. The Governor of Gyeongnam Province, Republic of Korea, Du Kwan Kim, expressed hope that COP 10 would provide momentum for action on DLDD, and pledged his province's continued commitment to such action.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the 66th session of UN General Assembly (UNGA), reported on the UNGA High-level Event on Desertification, noting recommendations to strengthen the scientific basis to better cope with DLDD, and to develop a goal for zero net land degradation, among others. In a video message, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for intensifying international cooperation among governments, CSOs and industry on combating desertification. Sha Zukang, Secretary-General, UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), said Rio+20 is a "once-in-a-generation opportunity," and governments need to show vision and exercise leadership.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Gnacadja urged parties to build on the momentum created by the UNGA High-level Event, and take advantage of the opportunity given by Rio+20 to raise SLM on the international agenda. Hwang Sik Kim, Prime Minister, Republic of Korea, welcomed delegates to the Republic of Korea and expressed confidence that COP 10 will stimulate international action and cooperation in the fight against desertification, including through the adoption of the Changwon Initiative.

ROUNDTABLE ON GREEN ECONOMY: Co-chair Janusz Zaleski, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Environment, Poland, highlighted the recent consultations on the green economy in Warsaw, noting that Rio+20 provides an opportunity to renew political commitment for sustainable development. In a keynote address, Sálvano Briceño, Chair Elect, Science Committee, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR), called for effective utilization of the risk reduction tools set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action. Concluding that combating DLDD is essential for building resilience, which in turn is at the heart of adaptation to climate change, he called for an integrated approach to funding humanitarian and development action.

Pointing to links between DLDD and poverty, and stressing the need for political will to address these challenges, Kabelo Mafura, Minister of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Lesotho, Moderator of the session, called on Ministers, Vice-Ministers and officials to offer perspectives on mechanisms needed to address DLDD in the framework of the green economy. Speakers commented on the debate over the definition of the green economy, and the potential for a green economy roadmap with specific goals and actions to provide an instrument to address DLDD. They addressed, *inter alia*, the need for poverty alleviation as a central goal, integrated approaches and recognition of the economic impacts of DLDD.

In the following discussion, delegates addressed the contribution of the fight against DLDD to the green economy by highlighting: the importance of the synergies among the three Rio Conventions; the successes of land rehabilitation in the Republic of Korea as an inspiring example; the need to invest in natural capital; the role of governments in providing ecosystem services; regional and south-south cooperation; capacity building and technology transfer; examination of current consumption patterns; and links between DLDD and forest management.

CONTACT GROUPS

WORKPLANS AND BUDGET: On Sunday, this contact group completed the first reading of the draft budget decision. On Monday afternoon, the group discussed the programme and budget of the Secretariat for the biennium 2012-2013. Delegates asked the Secretariat to prepare a table on the budget of RCUs and a staff table including all 65 posts of the Secretariat, which were provided and discussed in the evening.

ITERATIVE PROCESS: After agreeing on text on Sunday relating to draft decisions on best practices for implementing the Convention, programme of work for CRIC 11, and date and venue of CRIC 11, the contact group finalized negotiations on the accreditation of CSOs and private sector representatives before embarking on a first reading of the draft decision on promoting relationships with relevant conventions and international bodies. Negotiations on this draft decision will resume on Tuesday.

GM: A Chair's text for a draft decision was distributed to participants on Monday evening, but the contact group postponed its consideration to Tuesday morning, to allow participants to attend the welcome dinner hosted by the Minister of the Korea Forest Service on the occasion of the High-level Segment.

COW OUTSTANDING MATTERS: Chaired by Markku Aho (Finland), this group met on Monday evening to address ten draft decisions. Delegates agreed to a provisional programme of work for the group, aiming to finalize their work by Wednesday afternoon. The decision on a common fundraising strategy was deferred, given ongoing discussions on the structure and governance of the GM. After agreeing on the draft decision on the rules of procedure, the group considered the draft decision on the election of officers of the CST. This contact group will resume on Tuesday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As COP 10 participants exchanged stories about their delightful Saturday sightseeing trips, organized and sponsored by the Korean Government, and caught up on the contact groups' progress during meetings on Sunday, the enormity of the task ahead of them loomed large. The newly formed COW contact group began consideration on ten draft decisions, while the CRIC contact group on the iterative process struggled to find common ground on synergies with other conventions and international agencies before it was turned into yet another contact group, to start work on the mid-term evaluation and collaboration with the GEF. Meanwhile, the dedication of the contact groups on perennial last-night bottlenecks – the budget and the GM – notwithstanding, many wondered how the week's deliberations might conclude.