

UNCCD COP 10 HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2011

During the second day of the High-level Segment, UNCCD COP 10 delegates concluded their roundtable on addressing DLDD as a cornerstone of the green economy, and held a roundtable on harnessing scientific knowledge for combating DLDD. The High-level Segment concluded with the consideration of the “Changwon Initiative” and statements from the business community, CSOs and the COP 10 President’s summary. Presentations at the Rio Conventions Pavilion focused on the theme “Engaging indigenous peoples and local communities in sustainable land management.” Side events, the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum, and contact groups also took place during the day.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

ROUNDTABLE ON GREEN ECONOMY: Delegates resumed their roundtable on UNCCD in the context of Rio+20 and the green economy, moderated by Kabelo Mafura, Minister of Forestry and Land Reclamation, Lesotho, and representatives of 21 countries made statements. Many speakers highlighted the interlinkages between DLDD and poverty, food security, biodiversity protection and climate change and called for a broad and inclusive understanding of the green economy. Others cautioned against widening the scope of the Convention.

On the agenda for Rio+20, speakers highlighted that DLDD is now recognized as a global problem and called for incorporating SLM, including by vulnerable communities, into assessments of the true value of ecosystem services. Stressing that “nature is not a capital asset,” one speaker urged parties against treating it as a set of resources that can be exploited, modified, altered, privatized, commercialized and transformed without consequences.

Other speakers noted that a green economy focus includes, *inter alia*: linking forest, water and land management; creating employment; access to technologies, know-how and capacity building; strengthening sub-regional cooperation to expand greenbelts; South-South exchange and learning; and securing innovative financing to scale up SLM, especially at the local level. Summarizing the session, Co-chair Denis Lowe, Minister of Environment and Drainage, Barbados, underscored that the green economy agenda must address poverty eradication, employment and ecosystem vulnerability.

ROUNDTABLE ON SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE: COP 10 Vice-President Sonia Gonzales Molina, Peru, introduced the third roundtable on harnessing science knowledge for combating DLDD. Session Co-Chair Yin Hong, Vice Minister, State Forestry Administration, China, noted the shift from

resource to ecosystem management approaches, called attention to the link between desertification and other development issues, and encouraged raising public awareness of these links. Moderator Timo Mäkelä, Director, International Affairs, Life and Eco-innovation, European Commission, called attention to the policy-science platforms in the other two Rio Conventions. Keynote speaker Rattan Lal, Ohio State University, US, outlined the “trilemma” of DLDD, pointing to its causes, effects and consequences. He called for a “soil-based green revolution,” and underscored the centrality of soils in climate change mitigation, food security and environmental improvement.

Sherry Ayittey, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Ghana, highlighted the need for an intergovernmental panel to provide scientific advice to policy makers and mechanisms to disseminate information to people who need it. Mohammed Al Shiha, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Saudi Arabia, said the world should stand as one to address desertification, and supported establishing an intergovernmental panel for scientific advice. Noting that insufficient science has weakened support for UNCCD, William Dar, Director-General, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics, and former CST Chair, proposed that the UNCCD produce an authoritative “World Land Health Report” every five years and suggested that the UNCCD Scientific Conference be conducted separately from the CST, with a small panel of scientists subsequently reporting its findings to the CST and COP. Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), emphasized the importance of objective scientific advice for decision makers, and recalled that WMO has created regional drought monitoring centers in collaboration with UNCCD and organizes regional drought forecast meetings.

Several delegations, including ARGENTINA, ANGOLA, ECUADOR and GABON, urged the establishment of an independent, intergovernmental, interdisciplinary scientific panel on DLDD issues. BURKINA FASO stressed the need for ongoing financial support for such a platform. On its scope of work, SOUTH AFRICA and TANZANIA called for the platform to, *inter alia*: undertake regular assessments and syntheses of the state-of-the-art on DLDD; combine modern and traditional knowledge; and propose measures to promote ecosystem services and alternative energy. ETHIOPIA added that such a body should build a consolidated and accessible information database on DLDD. ISRAEL encouraged identifying knowledge gaps.

Supporting the role of the UNCCD in setting the science-policy nexus, the US urged building on existing and emerging platforms, including the IPBES. On incentives to reward participation in SLM, the PHILIPPINES suggested “innovative

funding arrangements,” including payments for ecosystem services. THAILAND shared an example from his country of farmer participation in SLM activities. VIET NAM and EGYPT called on the international community, donors and the GEF to ensure adequate resources for implementing the Convention and combating DLDD. KUWAIT announced it is organizing a conference on desert sandstorms later in the year. RWANDA highlighted the recent completion of its national land-use masterplan, underpinned by land tenure reform.

Summing up the roundtable, Co-chair Abdeladim Lhafi, High Commissioner for Water, Forests and Desertification Control, Morocco, reiterated the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of DLDD and called on the scientific community to compile aggregate indicators and policy-relevant syntheses to support drought risk management.

CHANGWON INITIATIVE: Younghyo Ha, Deputy Minister, Korea Forest Service, Republic of Korea, introduced the draft Changwon Initiative (ICCD/COP(10)/MISC.5/Rev.3), noting that it is a contribution to UNCCD COP 10 by the Republic of Korea as the COP 10 President. He highlighted its three components: enhancing the scientific process of the UNCCD; mobilizing resources and facilitating partnerships; and promoting best practices and establishing the “Land for Life Award.”

Supporting the initiative, Algeria, for the AFRICAN GROUP, agreed that the UNCCD is ready for a paradigm shift, as reflected in the Changwon Initiative. INDONESIA, UAE, CHINA, SAUDI ARABIA, INDIA, PERU and the PHILIPPINES also supported the Initiative.

Costa Rica, on behalf of GRULAC, took note of the document and called for its improvement. Highlighting that the Changwon Initiative is not a document for negotiation and noting that some work would be needed before it could be agreed text, ARGENTINA joined with GRULAC and supported the Initiative.

Supporting the objective of the Initiative, SWITZERLAND and the US expressed concern about overlaps of a scientific panel with existing scientific initiatives, such as FAO’s Global Soils Partnership. BRAZIL and the US said the UNCCD’s scope on arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions should be respected. POLAND proposed building on existing platforms rather than establishing a new scientific body.

Supporting the Initiative, KENYA said existing scientific bodies have already-established terms of reference, and it might not be possible to ask them to consider other issues. BURKINA FASO lauded the Changwon Initiative for seeking to mobilize private sector participation. KUWAIT hoped to participate in the Initiative at the regional level. TURKEY supported the Initiative as part of creating synergies for developing a green economy. Friends of the Earth, on behalf of CSOs, welcomed the Changwon Initiative, but stressed the need for more explicit recognition of the role of CSOs.

CLOSING STATEMENTS: Moon Kook-hyun, Chair of the SLM BUSINESS FORUM, reported on the outcome of the 1st SLM Business Forum. He presented a declaration from the business community containing five pillars, including building private sector awareness of the importance of land and DLDD issues and encouraging governments to develop new policies and incentives for SLM. Lamenting the decreasing participation of CSOs in the UNCCD, the Social Fund “Socium” of Support and Realization Youth’s Initiatives, Kyrgyzstan, on behalf of CSOs, said CSOs have taken an initiative to forge a CSO platform, which would provide an entity for “meaningful partnership and dialogue” with UNCCD stakeholders, and enhance the implementation of the Convention.

COP 10 President Lee closed the High-level Segment, which he said involved 156 countries. He noted the Segment had considered and “takes note with appreciation” the proposed Changwon Initiative. BRAZIL asked for copies of the Chair’s summary from the Segment.

CONTACT GROUPS

WORKPLANS AND BUDGET: This group met in the afternoon and, in a collaborative spirit, completed the first reading of the programme and budget of the GM (2012-2013). Some questions were raised regarding the staff costs. Regarding the Secretariat’s budget, some commented that efficiency should be raised and savings could be made. Parties will prepare a list of items where they believe efficiencies could be achieved and the Secretariat will comment on the implications of such proposed savings.

ITERATIVE PROCESS: This group concluded without agreeing on final text for its draft decision on synergies with other conventions. During an evening session, the group also embarked on a preliminary exchange of views on a draft decision on collaboration with the GEF, before adjourning to allow parties to make further consultations. The group will continue discussions on this decision on Wednesday, following which it will take up the decision on the mid-term review process.

GM: In the morning, the group agreed on preambular paragraphs of the draft decision. In the afternoon and late into the evening, participants agreed on operational paragraphs on: the transfer of legal representation of the GM from IFAD to the Secretariat; the Executive Secretary (ES) assuming overall management responsibility, including coordinating reporting on accounting, performance and activities of the GM to the COP; ensuring all accounts and staff managed by the GM are administered by the UN Office in Geneva (UNOG); and the ES to coordinate, with the support of senior staff of GM and of the Secretariat and others as appropriate, activities on joint workplans and corporate identity, and streamline financial management. The group will reconvene Wednesday morning.

COW OUTSTANDING MATTERS: With amendments following clarification from legal counsel on consistency of text across decisions, this group agreed to a draft decision on the election of officers to the CST. In consideration of the draft decision on the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, they discussed links between the decision and the communication strategy, amendments to requests to the Secretariat and financial implications. Delegates also queried the cost implications of actions in the draft decision on the review of progress in the implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy. Negotiations on decisions continued into the evening, and an informal meeting was called for Wednesday morning.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While High-level Segment discussions reaffirmed parties’ commitments to addressing DLDD, challenges remained for delegates negotiating the details of decisions. Some participants pointed to mismatches in scales of action and expectation to explain these challenges. Contrasts were noted between those who focused on identifying what a multilateral convention could do to set an international framework versus those who favored catalyzing action at the local level, and between those who came to COP 10 seeking ambitious outcomes versus those who had instructions to focus on minimizing costs. While those inclined to view the glass as half full pointed to side events as evidence of the UNCCD’s convening power, the “half-empty” camp questioned the ability of parties to reach meaningful compromises. Meanwhile, a number of sharp-eyed delegates speculated about the implications of the addition of cans of cold espresso to the free drinks in the refrigerators around the conference venue, and wondered whether a relaxant rather than a stimulant might be a better aid for reaching consensus.