

UNCCD COP 10 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2011

UNCCD COP 10 delegates discussed the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy during the morning, engaged in an open dialogue with CSOs in the afternoon and convened in the COW in the evening. Presentations at the Rio Conventions Pavilion focused on the theme “Poverty Reduction and the Rio Conventions.” Side events and contact groups also took place during the day.

CRIC

CRIC 10 Chair Chencho Norbu opened the panel discussion on the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy. Moderator Matt Walpole, UNEP-WCMC, invited the session’s three panelists to offer reflections on progress in realizing the goals of the Convention and proposals for the way forward. Octavio Pérez Pardo, Argentina, in his personal capacity, highlighted key achievements of the Convention as: a legal framework signed by 194 countries; a common strategy and institutional process for its implementation; country-led NAPs; PRAIS; and securing additional funding under the GEF land degradation focal area. He challenged parties to move away from a preoccupation with “internal housekeeping matters,” and focus instead on the “real issues.” Highlighting the interrelated problems of accessing financing and demonstrating results on the ground, he called for NAPs to start speaking in a language that banks understand by developing a clear message on “the environmental infrastructure required for SLM.”

ALGERIA noted that it is impossible to evaluate the Convention if it has not been properly implemented, and proposed a target of 50% NAP alignment for undertaking the mid-term evaluation. On the value of a long-term vision, BURKINA FASO said the Strategy has helped his country to “backstop” its national vision, by providing a means to operationalize SLM into national and local planning and capacity-building processes.

Sina Maiga Damba, AFAD, Mali, presented her organization’s activities in empowering women to combat desertification, by *inter alia*, enabling women’s access to loans and land, and boosting their participation in decision-making. She appealed to the international community to: improve political will and commitment to the Convention; raise awareness of DLDD; and establish a dialogue among institutions at all levels on DLDD. During the discussion, CHILE said the terms of reference for the mid-term evaluation should include the objective of increasing political and financial support to the UNCCD. ERITREA said the evaluation report must be results-based and should be a document of the COP.

Gustavo Fonseca, GEF, in his personal capacity, reviewed challenges related to resource mobilization, noting that financing decisions require needs assessments, the identification of existing flows and gaps and estimates of the overall need. Among other actions, he suggested projecting positive messages and success stories, demonstrating that SLM works and sharing that drylands are valuable to national economies. Fonseca highlighted that national trust funds can contribute to building capacity in developing countries; suggested tapping into the private, agricultural sector so these actors become boosters of SLM; and called for considering eliminating subsidies. He stressed the need to deliver tangible results from SLM, said there are mutual and interconnected responsibilities among recipients and donors in this regard, and highlighted the relevance of the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

OPEN DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The second open dialogue with CSOs for COP 10 focused on the theme “Dynamics, challenges and opportunities for civil society in implementing the UNCCD on the ground in the context of the Changwon Initiative” and was chaired by COP 10 Vice-President Breitwieser. Introducing the panelists, Moderator Patrice Burger, CARI-France, said the session would highlight issues that have not yet been sufficiently addressed.

Rachel Harris, WEDO, US, commended the UNCCD for developing an advocacy policy framework on gender. Interventions highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance gender mainstreaming across the Rio Conventions. Other speakers noted that synergies on this issue can best be realized at local level and underscored the usefulness of a gender approach for enhancing the effectiveness of SLM actions. The role of political will and enabling legal frameworks for women’s full participation were also highlighted.

Seyram Aqbemanya, ICLEI, South Africa, presented a case study of the Walvis Bay municipality on the Namibian coast, to illustrate the links between industrialization and desertification. She called for holistic approaches that engage local municipalities and businesses in SLM. During the discussion, speakers suggested looking beyond urbanization to address global supply chains and unsustainable consumption patterns. Others noted the contributions of CSO advocacy to reducing pressure on vulnerable areas and of voluntary business forums to green investments.

Subrata Bhattacharyya, Gramin Vikas Trust, India, outlined multi-stakeholder partnerships between government, the private sector and CSOs, and urged identification of partners with

significant and legitimate interests in services targeting the poor. Speakers noted that CSOs are at the heart of South-South cooperation.

Khadija Razavi, CENESTA, Iran, presented the impact of large-scale land grabbing and said CSOs have launched a global appeal to stop this growing practice. Speakers highlighted the role of legislation in addressing land grabbing, and one suggested distinguishing between land grabbing driven by need versus “economic greed” in order to develop appropriate policy responses.

Noel Oettle, EMG, South Africa, highlighted local adaptation for SLM in a rapidly changing world, showing a short film of actions taken by members of a local farmers cooperative following a severe drought in 2003. Oettle stressed that the Convention should support communities to adapt to climate variability. Interventions: called for a shared understanding of adaptation; cautioned against a narrow focus on carbon sequestration; lamented the limited funding available for climate adaptation vis-à-vis mitigation; called for access to green and proven technologies; and called for evaluation of the true value of the land, beyond production.

In final remarks, one CSO representative called for the COP “to start peddling solutions, not desperation.” Concluding the session, Co-facilitator Byong Hyon Kwon, Future Forest, thanked parties for the opportunity to share CSO experiences at COP 10 and welcomed the decision to include CSOs in the final version of the Changwon Initiative.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: COW Chair Philbert Brown reopened discussions on the programme budget and financial performance for the Convention’s trust funds (ICCD/COP(10)/7-20), which had been adjourned to allow the GM Managing Director to prepare a detailed response as requested by Chad. Managing Director Mersmann reported that 46.5% of contributions received in 2009-2010 (page 22 of ICCD/COP(10)/15) were directly invested into activities in Africa, and provided figures on the amount spent for various components. The AFRICAN GROUP asked the GM to provide parties with a clearer breakdown of spending for each region in future reports.

ELECTION OF CST OFFICERS: The Secretariat introduced the document on the amendment of the rules of procedure (including rule 22) related to the election of officers of the CST (ICCD/COP(10)/24). No comments were offered.

PARTICIPATION OF CSOs: The Secretariat introduced the agenda item on revised procedures for the participation of CSOs in meetings and processes of the UNCCD (ICCD/COP(10)/5 and ICCD/COP(10)/29).

The AFRICAN GROUP said the list of NGOs should be “cleaned up” and expressed concern about the practice through which certain developed countries directly fund CSO participation. GUINEA-BISSAU and PERU regretted the low-level of CSO participation at COP 10. GRULAC said the accreditation procedure should be clarified, CSO participation should be equitable among regions, and the selection committee should include representatives from each Annex.

OUTSTANDING JIU RECOMMENDATIONS: The Secretariat reported on the actions taken to implement JIU recommendations (ICCD/COP(9)/4). ARGENTINA commended the Secretariat for its work, noting the JIU recommendation on improving the Secretariat’s effectiveness has yielded results.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF WSSD: The Secretariat reported activities the Secretariat had carried out (ICCD/COP(9)/6). Algeria for the AFRICAN GROUP called on countries to increase their efforts so that DLDD will be placed high on the Rio+20 agenda.

RULE 47 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE: The Secretariat introduced the document (ICCD/COP(10)/23). The AFRICAN GROUP and GRULAC supported reaching decisions at the COP by consensus, and suggested deferring the consideration of this item to COP 11.

UN DECADE FOR DESERTS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST DESERTIFICATION (UNDDD): The Secretariat presented document ICCD/COP(10)/27. The AFRICAN GROUP encouraged developed countries to reconsider the decision to only provide voluntary contributions. Others suggested, *inter alia*, involving every region, complementing the Strategy with the comprehensive communication strategy, and pursuing synergies between biodiversity and UNDDD.

CONTACT GROUPS

OUTSTANDING MATTERS: On CSO matters, participants discussed, *inter alia*, whether language used in invitations for funding signaled the commitment of all parties to the participation of CSOs in the UNCCD process. Some also expressed concerns about references to outcomes of the high-level UNGA meeting on desertification. On mechanisms for regional coordination, delegates discussed the possibility of deferring the decision to COP 11, but some expressed their preference for a decision at COP 10. They expressed general agreement on the value of regional coordination. Negotiations were punctuated with reminders from many on the need to lighten the bureaucratic demands under the Convention and operate efficiently to make the best use of limited resources. On strengthening and enhancing the process of action programme alignment, delegates sent text related to the GEF to the CRIC contact group working on GEF-related matters, and discussed text on guidelines and barriers for alignment along with implementation of the NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs.

WORKPLANS AND BUDGET: On Tuesday night, parties discussed items related to the posts proposed in the Secretariat’s programme and budget for which the parties had raised questions. Parties asked the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive list of these items with related costs. During its meetings on Wednesday morning and afternoon, the group discussed the list prepared by the Secretariat. The group resumed its meeting in the evening and met into the night.

GM: The group met throughout the day to address operational paragraphs on delegation of authority for GM operations, termination or revision of the MoU with IFAD, and relocation of GM staff. The group agreed on the delegation of authority by the Executive Secretary to the Managing Director of the GM to: manage the GM programme and budget and take actions to implement the GM work programme; enter into agreement with donors on voluntary contributions; and employ GM personnel. The group will resume its deliberations on Thursday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Despite having meetings scheduled in the morning, afternoon and evening blocks and contact groups gathering in every available gap, many still carved out time for side events. At lunch, many gathered for a “questions and answers” session with the GEF Secretariat where basic elements of the GEF and its functioning were touched upon, in addition to much anticipated clarifications on how to access GEF funds for enabling activities under the land focal area. Others learned about the Global Soil Partnership, an initiative announced by the FAO in early September, where questions regarding how it meshed with the UNCCD and CST’s work were raised. The Secretariat paused to wish Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja a happy birthday, with some observers speculating his birthday wish might be an early resolution of all issues.