



UNCCD COP 11 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2013

On Thursday, COP 11 convened in two parallel sessions. The COW discussed GM housing arrangements, programme and budget, the Rio+20 outcome on LDNW, the Strategy, the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (UNDD), CSO participation and rules of procedure. The CST reviewed reports on the organization and outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, and began consideration of the draft multi-year work plan.

Throughout the day and in the evening contact group sessions took place on: budget and GM matters, a science-policy interface and best practices.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The COW resumed discussions on new housing arrangements for the GM. Many parties, including JAPAN, the US, the PHILIPPINES, and the AFRICAN GROUP, restated their support for the Secretariat report and called for a final decision on this issue in Windhoek.

Reiterating the “controversial and sometimes incorrect figures” in the report, ITALY asserted his country’s financial contribution results in annual savings for the GM. EGYPT requested an explanation on the “true reasons” behind the proposed relocation to Bonn, while TAJIKISTAN sought clarification on paragraph 46 of the report on the GM’s costs. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO expressed concern about proposals being “kept under the table.” MOROCCO and TUNISIA questioned whether the GM staff was consulted regarding relocation to Bonn.

PANAMA, with PERU, stressed the importance of considering the operational aspects of the GM’s resource mobilization mandate in deciding its location. BELGIUM drew attention to issues not fully addressed in the Secretariat’s report, including: legal modalities; the position of GM staff; and impacts on the functioning and independence of the GM vis-à-vis the Secretariat.

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: Noting additional funding does not guarantee effective implementation, BRAZIL opposed a budget increase, calling for improvements in cost efficiency and use of teleconference facilities. He also questioned the added value of new bureaucratic structures proposed by AGSA, describing the additional cost as “irresponsible.”

The US, with TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, called for a 3% decrease in the budget and urged fiscal discipline, saying her country is unable to increase financial support. Swaziland, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, opposed any budget reduction and urged parties to pay their arrears.

CUBA, ARGENTINA, MEXICO, ALGERIA, CUBA, PERU and COLOMBIA urged strengthening regional coordination mechanisms, and reflecting regional annexes’ needs in workplan

and budget allocations. THAILAND urged synergies with other Rio Conventions, while INDIA regretted the budgetary increase of less than 4.9% over the last biennium.

Recalling the budget shortfall since COP 10, Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary, reported that regional meetings had only been made possible with voluntary funding.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOMES OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20): Melchiade Bukuru, UNCCD Secretariat, introduced this item (ICCD/COP(11)/5 and Corr.1), explaining its contribution to the work of the UN Task Team assisting the Co-Chairs of the General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG).

Algeria, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, with the EU, advocated establishing an intersessional expert group. The EU and INDIA suggested the group consider options for integrating the Rio+20 outcome in a new UNCCD strategy at COP 13.

CHINA suggested target setting must be based on consensus, scientific evaluation and effective institutional guarantees. NAMIBIA, supported by ALGERIA and ARMENIA, said paragraph 17 of the Rio+20 outcome provides a clear mandate for the UNCCD to take action. He said he would table a draft decision for a specific protocol or annex to come out of COP 11.

Emphasizing lack of clarity and scientific agreement on LDNW and ZNLD, the US proposed deletion of references to these concepts. CUBA, ARGENTINA, PERU, MEXICO and BRAZIL cautioned against prejudging the outcome of the post-2015 development agenda process, with BRAZIL also opposing expanding UNCCD’s mandate on land issues beyond drylands.

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

The Secretariat introduced the report under the sub-item on “Review of progress in the implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy” (ICCD/COP(11)/2). Zimbabwe, for the AFRICAN GROUP, suggested adopting an outreach programme on DLDD and developing a communication strategy to catalyze investment. A CSO representative urged support for participatory rural communication and education activities in local languages.

The Secretariat then introduced the sub-item on “Improving mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention” (ICCD/COP(11)/14). South Africa, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, requested placement of the regional coordinating unit (RCU) at the UN Economic Commission for Africa. GEORGIA noted interest by countries in Central and Eastern Europe to develop a regional coordination mechanism.

The Secretariat introduced the sub-item on activities under the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification (UNDD) for 2010-2020 (ICCD/COP(11)/19) and reported on its work to prepare a policy review paper at the request of the OWG Co-Chairs. INDIA, GHANA, ALGERIA, and TAJIKISTAN



highlighted national observance activities in their countries. ALGERIA lamented that the non-dynamic nature of the UNDD website hinders awareness raising. Zimbabwe, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, called for mainstreaming UNDD activities with World Environment Day.

RULE 47 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE: Gerardo Gunero-Lazzaroni, UNCCD Secretariat, noted this agenda item has been outstanding since COP 2, and presented options for moving forward on COP decision-making processes as outlined in document ICCD/COP(11)/16. ALGERIA, joined by ARGENTINA, said consensus should be the norm for the COP.

CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION OF CSOs AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR: The Secretariat then introduced this sub-item (ICCD/COP(11)/4). CSOs lamented that since COP 10, only annex region CSOs and private sector representatives are allowed to register, and suggested stricter accreditation requirements, including on sustainability.

CST

RESHAPING THE OPERATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN LINE WITH THE STRATEGY:

In the morning the CST reconvened to consider the outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, held in April 2013, in Bonn, Germany. Jonathan Davis, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), recalled the Conference's objective of strengthening best practices and producing sound research. Referring to the preliminary outcome contained in document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/4, he presented the recommendations contained in the final outcome document (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/INF.3 and Corr.1).

During the ensuing discussion, YEMEN called for a unified definition of DLDD. The EU highlighted inaccessible research outputs due to language barriers. MOROCCO lamented the low survey response rate. SOUTH AFRICA, with ITALY, called for efforts to publish the white papers and research presented at the Conferences to enhance outreach.

ISRAEL distinguished between academic conferences and scientific assessments that generate policy-relevant recommendations. TUNISIA remarked that the first two Conferences have not provided compelling evidence to decision makers and funding entities about the role of scientific research on DLDD and, with MALI, suggested this be the focus of the 3rd Scientific Conference. A CSO representative stressed the need for greater focus on agro-ecology.

SAC Chair Davis observed that lessons had been learned from the first Conference. He acknowledged the use of white papers had contributed to a "formulaic" structure, noting science is not a negotiating process, and suggesting a SPI could help improve the conversation between science and policy makers.

The Secretariat further noted the need to clarify responsibility for scientific assessments and ensure that the 3rd Scientific Conference builds on the COP decision on the AGSA.

Chair Magalhães opened the discussion on the sub-item on independent assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/INF.5 and ICCD/COP(11)/CST/4). Rachel Schutte, Consultant, provided an overview of the assessment methodology. Among recommendations, she highlighted the need for, *inter alia*: gender and regional balance; early confirmation of the Conference date and venue; and inviting renowned scientists. She suggested "decoupling" the Conferences from the CST process to free up resources for implementation and the post-conference phase.

Commenting on the report, JAPAN said the UNCCD must undertake more and better communication of Conference results to improve voluntary funding contributions. ETHIOPIA and UGANDA indicated side events should be better organized. ARGENTINA stressed the need for clear selection criteria for the SAC, including regional balance.

In the afternoon, Chair Magalhães presented the assessment of UNCCD Scientific Conferences (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/4) and recommended that future Conferences be held during CST intersessionals, and the CST determine a date, venue, and theme for the 5th and 6th Special Sessions of the CST and the 4th and 5th Scientific Conferences. On how to maintain momentum achieved during the second Conference, the CST Bureau and the Global Risk Forum Davos proposed to, *inter alia*: encourage lead participating scientists to publish outcomes to stakeholders; find ways of including scientists in the roster of independent experts; widely disseminate papers; and enhance multidisciplinary.

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT MULTI-YEAR (FOUR-YEAR) WORKPLAN FOR THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (2014–2017): Elysabeth David, UNCCD Secretariat, introduced document ICCD/CRIC(12)/2-ICCD/COP(11)/CST/9 to be considered in its totality by the CRIC, noting the CST is only responsible for discussing the objective on science, technology and knowledge.

ARGENTINA observed that while RCUs are mentioned in the workplan, they do not have the capacity to implement the outlined activities, and, supported by the US and BRAZIL, questioned why the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) was not specifically referenced in the workplan. MOROCCO suggested adding capacity building to the operational objective on advocacy, awareness raising and education.

BRAZIL suggested strengthening the conceptual framework of UNCCD on drylands and asked how CSOs would be brought into the work.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Chair Magalhães referred this agenda item to the CST contact group meeting on Friday morning.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Chair Magalhães referred this agenda item to the CST contact group meeting on Friday morning.

CONTACT GROUPS

On the organization of work going forward, Chair González said the CRIC contact group will meet Friday morning and early afternoon. He said that information on when the COW contact group on budget will discuss the multi-year plan will be communicated. During the COW contact group in the afternoon, Facilitator Aho submitted a draft decision containing bracketed text on the various housing options for the GM, for parties' consideration.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the first week of UNCCD COP 11 nears its end, delegates noted that divisions on a number of agenda items had come into focus. Although some had thought that the COP 10 decisions on the GM would mean that this COP would spend less time on it, participants noted that discussions in the COW on the GM's location revealed that COP 11 is still engaged "in a game of lobbying" on this issue. On the planned CST decision on institutional options for providing scientific advice to the UNCCD, parties remain divided on the options. One delegate stated that there are "three camps."

One delegate expressed his opinion that Friday's contact group sessions would be "the long day before a long night of work."