

CSD-16 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 8 MAY 2008

On Thursday, CSD-16 participants convened in parallel sessions to discuss land, drought and desertification and Africa.

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

LAND: Vice-Chair Tharyat chaired the session. Joan Kagwanja (ECA) proposed, among others, decentralization and increased government financing for land policies that can enhance access by the poor to productive land resources and security. Rowshan Moni (Association for Land Reform and Development) called for a focus on root causes, implementation of international instruments, and civil society participation. Laureano del Castillo (Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales) stressed a focus on small farmers and landowners, appropriate land rights, and recognition of diverse tenure systems. Klaus Deininger (World Bank) stressed better impact evaluation, tools linking issues to structural factors, and indicators to compare country progress. Christian Mersmann (Global Mechanism) described the complex financial architecture, and said climate change may be the locomotive for increased funding and agriculture and environment ministries must make the economic case for sustainable land management.

FAO agreed with the UNCCD's suggestion to coordinate efforts on land, and suggested building on the International Land Coalition. WOMEN explained that, without title to land, women have no access to credit. FRANCE said loss of soil fertility is a global threat. NGOs called for agrarian reform, including land redistribution and the delivery of basic support services.

The EU noted it promotes consensual land practices and focuses on pro-poor land governance. JAPAN said detailed analysis is required to explore the tension between biofuel and food production. TANZANIA described its policies that protect forest and woodland areas.

ZAMBIA appealed for assistance to enhance implementation of its land policy framework. ZIMBABWE said empowerment requires increasing women's security of tenure, planning that recognizes multiple land uses, and monitoring land use and rehabilitation. FARMERS emphasized recognizing agro-ecological and ecosystem principles. SWITZERLAND said good governance, ecological principles, and retention of working practices are essential in tenure systems. The CZECH REPUBLIC said using information technologies in its land-tenure system has increased transparency and improved data quality. SOUTH AFRICA said capital investment is indispensable, even with strategic partnerships and regional cooperation. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS called for grievance mechanisms, social dialogue, and empowerment of

stakeholders to deal with land-degrading big business activities. COTE D'IVOIRE urged the GEF to invest in sustainable land management.

Concluding, panelists highlighted the: complexity of land issues; knowledge divide between finance and sectoral ministries; non-accessibility of electronic cadastral systems by vulnerable groups; and need for long-term commitment in sustainable land management and research in emerging issues.

DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION: Vice-Chair Carmon chaired the morning session. Zhang Kebin (Beijing Forestry University) dwelt on the linkages between the causes and impacts of climate change, drought and desertification, and biodiversity loss. He noted the "enormous potential" of the UNCCD, which he said deserves full government backing, so that synergies are maximized to reduce environmental, social and economic vulnerability. Joost Brouwer (Brouwer Environmental and Agricultural Consultancy) used the example of Niger in the Sahel to describe the challenge of sustainable use of wetlands, and argued for their integrated management, including through small-scale development. Sara Scherr (Ecoagriculture Partners) questioned the premise that drylands are not suitable for agricultural development, and suggested measures to improve conditions by, in particular, funding existing initiatives and involving local communities in priority setting. To enhance synergies among conventions, Bakary Kante (UNEP) highlighted the role of traditional knowledge and cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches. Scott Christiansen (ICARDA) described integrated approaches adopted in Syria to deal with land degradation and drought.

The EU stressed scientific research and monitoring, efforts to increase the availability and diffusion of information, and identification of innovative financial resources. CANADA suggested wider application of the ecosystem approach. CHILDREN AND YOUTH noted that education and marketing are necessary elements of successful wastewater reclamation projects.

JAPAN discussed bilateral efforts to implement the UNCCD and suggested that technologies should be selected by local residents, suitable to local conditions, and not monopolized by one group. Panelist Scherr highlighted the importance of having multistakeholder processes, to build capacity and governance that can contribute to conflict resolution when resource conflicts arise. NGOs emphasized the importance of multistakeholder approaches and working with grassroots actors.

INDONESIA appealed to developed countries to fulfill their commitments made within the UNFCCC framework. MEXICO called for adopting proactive measures to address land degradation and desertification. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA outlined cooperative activities to combat desertification in

Northeast Asia. WOMEN said they should be involved in all dryland activities. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION outlined a programme in arid and semi-arid regions. The US said enhancing cooperation among conventions should recognize the distinct functions of different conventions. TOGO emphasized synergies among conventions, training, awareness raising, and finance and technology. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES highlighted involving communities and indigenous people, and traditional knowledge. CHINA outlined policy measures in combating desertification, including forbidding deforestation. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS called for sustainable work conditions and protection of workers in the agricultural sector. FARMERS said regenerated dryland should be turned into an economic asset.

CANADA questioned how scientific understanding could be translated into policy recommendations and prioritized for action. UN/ISDR suggested not duplicating efforts already undertaken, including the Hyogo Framework on building resilience. ARGENTINA suggested that synergies among the three Rio conventions could be fostered by focusing on quality of life and poverty. BANGLADESH highlighted research on agriculture, technology transfer, insurance schemes and regional cooperation. GUATEMALA described the experience of municipal government community groups in water conservation.

Vice-Chair Santizo-Sandoval chaired the afternoon discussion. Nir Atzmon (Israel) presented afforestation strategies in Israel and highlighted the need to involve local communities in projects. Pierpaolo Faggi (University of Padua, Italy) suggested ways to increase the resilience of projects, including avoiding extreme specialization and technocratic bureaucracies, which may minimize the role of traditional knowledge, and fostering local planning. Christian Mersmann (Global Mechanism) discussed financing strategies in the face of decentralized financial resources, including tackling drought and desertification under the adaptation umbrella, and a stronger forest agenda under the UN Forum on Forests with regard to rural development. Carlos Gonzalez Vicente (Mexico) highlighted the importance of prevention and awareness raising strategies in Mexico.

PSIDS urged development partners to assist them in combating desertification, including through finance, technology and capacity. CANADA said it seeks to become the global leader in environmental sustainability, and is committed to continue supporting countries in addressing drought and desertification. FARMERS outlined the implementation of the Sustainable Land Management Programme in South Africa. CHINA emphasized improving farmers' livelihoods and disseminating technologies. GUATEMALA thanked the Global Mechanism for its support. LIBYA highlighted the importance of human resources, technology and rapid early warning systems. EGYPT noted the need to strengthen capacity, and international and regional cooperation.

WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS urged governments to establish measures to protect agricultural workers. PAKISTAN highlighted the need for a drought response strategy. The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNITY supported long-term monitoring and making information readily available. PALESTINE noted degradation of land and loss of biodiversity in the occupied territory. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES stressed the value of traditional knowledge. The CZECH REPUBLIC supported the regional initiative launched by the UNCCD and the Global Mechanism on the implementation of the Ten-Year Strategic Plan. WOMEN said drought causes migration of men, which worsens women's situation.

ZAMBIA and ITALY described the impact of drought and desertification nationally. ALGERIA stressed desertification as a factor in food insecurity, and emphasized regional arrangements. CHILDREN AND YOUTH volunteered engagement in designing sustainable development strategies. NGOs noted the low level of civil society participation in decision making, and

called for provision of basic information in local languages. WMO highlighted monitoring, early drought warning, and data collection under a single national authority. BELARUS spoke of rehabilitating areas polluted by radioactivity. LOCAL AUTHORITIES warned of increased migration and said that, although the food crisis calls for quick action, long-term solutions are available.

AFRICA: CSD-16 Chair Nhema (Zimbabwe) chaired the session and the Secretariat introduced the Secretary-General's report on Africa (E/CN.17/2008/8). He said that, although bilateral aid flows and ODA had increased, they still fall short of international commitments. Gerry Noble (Microcare, Uganda) outlined the relationship between insurance and poverty reduction, said the poor are insurable, but questioned why the price of pharmaceuticals in Africa is twice the price in Asia. David Tommy (UNIDO) highlighted that most African nations lack value-added tiered agricultural sectors. Nebiyeleul Gessese (Global Development Solutions) said that, beyond production constraints, Africa's small-scale farmers are not integrated horizontally and vertically along the commodity value chains. Marjetta Eilitta (IFDC) proposed shifting to intensive agriculture, attending to national and regional markets, and connecting farmers to markets.

The EU said regional integration is important for Africa's global competitiveness and that the EU has approved its Aid for Trade strategy. The G-77/CHINA stressed the need to scale-up efforts nationally and said African governments have committed to allocate 10% of national budgets to agriculture. PSIDS noted they face similar challenges to Africa and highlighted the potential market for cultural handicrafts. The NETHERLANDS said its development cooperation policy in Africa focuses on peace, economic development, equity, empowerment of women, and access to sustainable energy. INDIA said it has allocated US\$500 million to Africa over the next five years. DJIBOUTI noted that Africa faces deteriorating terms of trade, making debt-burdens unsustainable.

NORWAY emphasized small-holder farmers' challenges, including low productivity and market failures. CANADA underlined the importance of health and education programmes. COMOROS stressed technical capacity building and promoting the status of women in rural areas. NGOs said WTO rules need to be reviewed, if Africa is to make progress. Noting the importance of trade for Africa, CHINA emphasized the need for a fair and equitable international trade system and suggested giving preferential trade terms to least developed countries.

SOUTH AFRICA noted it has developed an implementation strategy for NEPAD. The CZECH REPUBLIC stressed that the critical constraint for Africa is social and economic inequality. ARGENTINA said that, without trade barriers, African states could compete in the world market. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for a greater spirit of collaboration and said Africans should not devalue their own cultures. ZAMBIA urged development partners to increase the quantity and quality of aid.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the first week of CSD-16 draws to a close, some participants were heard complaining about repetitious statements from the floor, a sign that the debate on all themes of the cluster has been exhaustive. Several delegates are now pondering the next stage: how the parallel discussions will feed into the second week's high-level segment, and into the Chair's final and necessarily comprehensive summary? The clipped lists of main points provided by the Chairs' at the end of each meeting will certainly help, though they do not reflect all the nuances. There was also talk that the African Ministers' weekend "retreat" in a city hotel (hosted by CSD-16 Chair Nhema) is meant to solidify a strong African message for incorporation in the session's summary.