



SEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (COP-7): 17-28 OCTOBER 2005

The Seventh Conference of the Parties (COP-7) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (CCD) opens today at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates to COP-7 will consider a number of issues, including: programme and budget; consideration of additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention; comprehensive review of the activities of the secretariat; review of activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and relevant international organizations, institutions and agencies; consideration of the follow-up to the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) relevant to the CCD; rationale for, modalities for, costs involved in, feasibility of, possible terms of reference of, and institutional and collaborative arrangements for the regional coordination units; consideration of the progress made, *inter alia*, by the Global Mechanism, in mobilizing financial resources to support CCD implementation; consideration of rule 47 of the rules of procedure; consideration of the interim report on the status of preparation of the 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification; and consideration of the report on relations between the secretariat and its host country.

The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) will meet from 18-20 October, to discuss: review of the report of the CST, including its recommendations to the COP and its programme of work for the period after COP-7, and the provision of guidance to it; land degradation vulnerability and rehabilitation: an integrated approach; and maintenance of the roster of experts and creation of *ad hoc* panels of experts, as necessary, with their terms of reference and modalities of work.

The fourth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-4) will meet from 18-21 October to: consider the comprehensive report of the third session; review the policies, operational modalities and activities of the Global Mechanism; review the report prepared by the Secretariat on the execution of its functions; and consider the report on the collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It is also expected to adopt the programme of work for CRIC-5.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CCD

The Convention to Combat Desertification is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation. The CCD was adopted on 17 June 1994, opened for signature in October 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996, and currently has 191 parties. The CCD recognizes the physical, biological and socioeconomic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer so that it is demand-driven, and the involvement of local communities in combating desertification and land degradation. The core of the CCD is the development of national, subregional and regional action programmes by national governments, in cooperation with donors, local communities and NGOs.

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION: In 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, adopted Resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD). The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994, and drafted the CCD and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. A fifth annex for Central and Eastern Europe was elaborated and adopted during COP-4 in December 2000.

Pending the CCD's entry into force, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports on urgent action for Africa and interim measures in other regions, and to prepare for COP-1. The preparations included discussion of the Secretariat's programme and budget, the functions of and administrative arrangements for the financial mechanism under the CCD, the Global Mechanism (GM), and the establishment of the Committee on Science and Technology.

COP-1: The first Conference of the Parties (COP-1) met in Rome, Italy, from 29 September to 10 October 1997. The CST held its first session concurrently from 2-3 October. The COP-1 and CST-1 agendas consisted primarily of organizational matters. Delegates selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the CCD's Permanent Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the organization to administer the GM. At the CST's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the continuation of the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators, and decided that CST-2 should consider linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. One plenary meeting was devoted to a dialogue between NGOs and delegates. Delegates subsequently adopted a proposal that plenary meetings at future COPs be devoted to similar NGO dialogues.



COP-2: COP-2 met in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 November to 11 December 1998. The CST met in parallel with the COP from 1-4 December. Delegates approved arrangements for the institutional linkage between the CCD and the UN Secretariat and the headquarters agreement with the German Government. The Secretariat moved to Bonn in early 1999. The COP approved adjustments to its budget and adopted the outstanding rules of procedure concerning Bureau members, but retained bracketed language regarding rule 47 on majority voting in the absence of consensus. Central and Eastern European countries were invited to submit to COP-3 a draft regional implementation annex. The CST established an *ad hoc* panel to follow up its discussion on linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. Delegates considered, but deferred to COP-3, decisions on the Secretariat's medium-term strategy, adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the COP and IFAD regarding the GM, and the G-77/China proposal to establish a Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention.

COP-3: Parties met for COP-3 in Recife, Brazil, from 15-26 November 1999, with the CST meeting in parallel to the COP from 16-19 November. The COP approved the long-negotiated MOU regarding the GM. It decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze in depth the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes and to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the CCD. Delegates also agreed to continue consultations on the additional draft regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe, with a view to adopting it at COP-4. The COP also appointed an *ad hoc* panel on traditional knowledge and an *ad hoc* panel on early warning systems.

COP-4: COP-4 convened from 11-22 December 2000, in Bonn, Germany. The CST met from 12-15 December. The COP's notable achievements were the adoption of the fifth regional Annex for Central and Eastern Europe, commencement of work by the *ad hoc* working group to review CCD implementation, initiation of the consideration of modalities for the establishment of the CRIC, submission of proposals to improve the work of the CST, and the adoption of a decision on the GEF Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support to the CCD's implementation.

COP-5: COP-5 met from 1-13 October 2001, in Geneva, Switzerland, and the CST met in parallel from 2-5 October. The COP focused on setting the modalities of work for the two-year interval before COP-6. Progress was made in a number of areas, most notably, in the establishment of the CRIC, identification of modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and in the enhancement of the CCD's financial base following strong support for a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

CRIC-1: The first meeting of the CRIC was held at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002. The CRIC was established in accordance with decision 1/COP.5 to regularly review the implementation of the CCD, draw conclusions, and propose concrete recommendations to the COP on further implementation steps. CRIC-1 considered presentations from the five CCD regions, addressing the seven thematic issues under review: participatory processes; legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements; linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies; measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land, drought and desertification monitoring and assessment; early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought; access by affected country parties to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how; and resource mobilization and coordination. The meeting also considered information on financial mechanisms in support of the CCD's

implementation, advice provided by the CST and the GM, and the Secretariat's report on actions aimed at strengthening the relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations.

COP-6/CRIC-2: COP-6 met from 25 August-6 September 2003, in Havana, Cuba, marking the CCD's transition from awareness raising to implementation. Among the issues marking this transition were the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism to the CCD and identification of criteria for the CRIC's COP-7 review. Progress was made on a number of other issues as well, including: activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies; enhancing the effectiveness of the CST; and follow-up to the WSSD. The COP adopted 31 decisions, of which eight were developed in the CST and six in the CRIC.

CRIC-2 convened from 26-29 August 2003, and addressed the review of the implementation of the CCD and of its institutional arrangements, and review of information on the financing of CCD implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

WORKSHOP ON FORESTS AND FOREST ECOSYSTEMS:

The Workshop on "Forests and Forest Ecosystems: Promoting Synergy in the Implementation of the Three Rio Conventions" was held from 5-7 April 2004, in Viterbo, Italy. The workshop was organized by the Secretariats of the CCD and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The goal of the workshop was to encourage the implementation of specific actions at the local level on forests and forest ecosystems and their use and conservation and further develop synergistic processes in this sector in order to contribute to a more effective implementation of the Rio conventions.

REGIONAL MEETINGS: A number of regional meetings have been held since COP-6, including:

Africa: Launching meeting of the Thematic Programme Network on Renewable Energies and Environmentally Sound Eco-Technologies (5-7 May 2004, Nairobi); and the Launching Meeting of the Thematic Programme Network on Sustainable Agricultural Farming Systems (22-24 November 2004, Tunis).

Asia: Meeting of Asian Region Members of the Group of Experts (3-5 February 2004, Tokyo); the Launching meeting of the Thematic Programme Network on the Implementation of Integrated Local Area Development Programmes (7-9 June, Islamabad, Pakistan); and First Regional Consultation Meeting on the Abu Dhabi Initiative for the Implementation of the Priority Activities for the Regional Action Programme (21-23 March 2005, Abu Dhabi, UAE).

Latin America and the Caribbean: Launching meeting of the Regional Thematic Programme Network on Integrated Water Resource Management (13-15 December 2004, Caracas, Venezuela); and 10th LAC Regional Meeting for Implementation of the CCD (29-31 August 2005, São Luis, Brazil).

Northern Mediterranean: Regional meeting to strengthen the cooperation among Northern Mediterranean countries in the field of land resources management (17-18 May 2004, Bonn, Germany).

CRIC-3: The third meeting of the CRIC was held from 2-11 May 2005, in Bonn, Germany. It reviewed the implementation of the Convention in Africa, considered issues relating to the Convention implementation at the global level, shared experiences, and made concrete recommendations for future work of the Convention. CRIC-3 concluded its work by adopting its report, containing recommendations and conclusions on the implementation of the Convention both in Africa and at the global level, for consideration and decisions at COP-7.