

## UNCCD COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, FIFTH SESSION: 12-21 MARCH 2007

The fifth session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 5) opens today in Buenos Aires, Argentina and will continue until 21 March 2007. The CRIC was established by the fifth Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as a subsidiary body of the COP to assist in the regular review of implementation of the Convention, in order to draw conclusions and to propose to the COP concrete recommendations on further steps to enhance its effectiveness.

This session of the CRIC will be devoted to the review of: the implementation of the Convention in affected country parties in regions other than Africa; and reports by developed countries, relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations, and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on measures taken to assist the implementation of national action programmes (NAPs) of affected countries in regions other than Africa.

Consequently, CRIC 5 will consider national reports and results of regional meetings in each of the regions under review, namely Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe. Reports on support given to these regions by developed country parties and other relevant organizations will also be considered. The meeting will further address the promotion of technology transfer and know-how and the improvement of national reporting, as well as a review of the International Year for Deserts and Desertification (IYDD).

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNCCD

The UNCCD is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation in the drylands. The UNCCD was adopted on 17 June 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996, and currently has 191 parties. The UNCCD 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 UNCCD 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 UN 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 UNCCD 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 the fourth Conference of the Parties (COP-4) in December 2000.

Pending the UNCCD's entry into force, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports on urgent actions 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 Convention, known as the Global Mechanism (GM), and the establishment of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

**COP-1:** 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 UNCCD's Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development 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 decided that similar NGO dialogues should be scheduled at future COP plenary sessions.

**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 to host the Secretariat in Bonn. 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.

**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 Memorandum of Understanding (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 UNCCD. In addition, the COP 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. COP-4'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 UNCCD 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 Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support of the UNCCD'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 UNCCD'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 headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002. The CRIC was established to regularly review the implementation of the UNCCD, draw conclusions, and propose concrete recommendations to the COP on further implementation steps. CRIC 1 considered presentations from the five UNCCD regions and addressed 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; and 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 UNCCD'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, and marked the UNCCD's transition from awareness raising to implementation. Among the issues marking this transition were the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD and identification of criteria for the COP-7 review of the CRIC. Progress was also made on a number of other issues, 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 World Summit on Sustainable Development. CRIC 2 convened from 26-29 August 2003, and addressed the review of the implementation of the UNCCD and of its institutional arrangements, and the review of financing of UNCCD implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions. The COP adopted 31 decisions, eight of which were developed in the CST and six in the CRIC.

**IYDD:** At its 58th session, in resolution 58/211 of 23 December 2003, the UN General Assembly declared 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD). In doing so, the General Assembly underlined its deep concern about the exacerbation of desertification and noted its far-reaching implications for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, which are to be met by 2015.

**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 Convention implementation at the global level, shared experiences, and made concrete recommendations for the future work of the Convention. The CRIC 3 report contained recommendations on the implementation of the Convention both in Africa and at the global level for consideration and decision at COP-7.

**COP-7:** COP-7 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17-28 October 2005. Nearly 1000 participants gathered to review the implementation of the Convention, develop an MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF, adopt the programme and budget for the 2006-2007 biennium, and review the recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN, among other agenda items. The proposal to include an additional agenda item on the procedure for the selection of an Executive Secretary was not accepted and the discussion on the regional coordination units ended without the adoption of a decision. In the end, the COP adopted 31 decisions, many of which addressed various aspects of Convention implementation.

### INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**IYDD ACTIVITIES:** A series of conferences and seminars organized by governments and intergovernmental and research organizations were held throughout 2006 within the framework of the IYDD. Events were held in Europe, North America, Africa and Asia on topics ranging from sustainable land management to promoting the participation of civil society in the UNCCD, as well as events on women and youth and desertification. For a full list of events held, see: <http://www.iisd.ca/africa/pdf/arc0601e.pdf>

**JOINT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "DESERTIFICATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL POLICY IMPERATIVE":** This Conference, held from 17-19 December 2006 in Algiers, Algeria, concluded the IYDD and focused on policies needed for successful drylands management at the local, national, regional and international levels. During the conference, Algeria and ministers from Arab countries presented a proposal requesting that the United Nations General Assembly declare 2010-2020 as the decade of deserts and desertification.

**UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL:** The 24th session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-24/GMEF) took place from 5-9 February 2007, in Nairobi, Kenya. Following a proposal by Algeria, the GC/GMEF adopted a decision recommending the UN General Assembly to declare, during its 62nd session, the decade 2010-2020 as the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification.