Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in a High-Level Segment from 10:00 am to 9:30 pm. The contact group on programme and budget and the Friends of the Chair Group on the ten-year strategic plan met throughout the day and, alongside the contact group on the CRIC which met in the afternoon, continued into the evening.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

COP 8 President Cristina Narbona called the High-Level Segment to order. Grégoire de Kalbematten, UNCCD Secretariat Officer-in-Charge, delivered a statement from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which highlighted that the twin threats of climate change and desertification affect our ability to reach the MDGs by 2015, and looked forward to the role that the ten-year strategic plan would play in the fight against desertification.

UNCCD Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja welcomed the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan, which provides coherence and a common understanding for the UNCCD’s implementation. Outlining his vision to manage a successful business, he “pledged,” in consultation with all relevant actors, to restructure the Secretariat to enable it to implement the strategy, effect all the recommendations in the JIU report as well as results-based and accountable budgeting, draw in private sector actors, and regularly communicate with the public.

Eighty-five speakers then addressed the High-Level Segment, including 17 Ministers and 9 Vice-Ministers. Many speakers discussed their UNCCD-related national activities, including BAHRAIN, CAPE VERDE, CROATIA, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, KYRGYZSTAN, MOROCCO, NEPAL, UGANDA, VIETNAM and YEMEN, as well as the ARAB REPUBLIC, KYRGYZSTAN, MOROCCO, NEPAL, BAHRAIN, CAPE VERDE, CROATIA, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

Several speakers, including SUDAN and PALESTINE, highlighted the links between natural resources and climate change. GABON said its forests absorb carbon and climate change. GABON said its forests absorb carbon and climate change. ARMENIA highlighted the roles of funding sources, such as the Adaptation Fund and the CDM, in addressing desertification and climate change. ARMENIA highlighted the roles of funding sources, such as the Adaptation Fund and the CDM, in addressing desertification and climate change.

A number of countries underscored the need for stronger financial flows to address desertification and climate change. GABON said its forests absorb carbon and climate change. ARMENIA highlighted the roles of funding sources, such as the Adaptation Fund and the CDM, in addressing desertification and climate change.
On the ten-year strategic plan, speakers suggested that it: needs concrete goals, preferably quantitative (MEXICO); should emphasize enhanced capacity at the local level to adapt to climate change and increase support to developing countries to combat desertification (CHINA); will enable the adoption of better regional and global integrated strategies (HONDURAS); should reflect the needs of countries in South and East Europe (MOLDOVA); should be accompanied by an implementation framework (CHAD); and needs a substantial budget to be effective (GUINEA). SWAZILAND said all parties should implement it within their differentiated capacities.

The EU noted that approving the ten-year strategic plan and an adequate budget, coupled with solid collaborative work between the Secretariat and GM, provides the requisite conditions for UNCCD implementation. CÔTE D’IVOIRE said the plan should be adopted and required reforms implemented.

On the GM, speakers said it should: be located in IFAD (GUATEMALA); cooperate more closely with the Secretariat, and continue work under its new reforms (BENIN); be strengthened in its structure (BRAZIL); and engage in increased capacity building (MALI). IFAD emphasized its strong commitment to the GM. The GM said: it looks forward to “delivering as one” with the Secretariat based on their different mandates and functions; the GM’s cooperation with IFAD is growing stronger; and the COP has already given strong guidance to the GM and Secretariat on how to move forward. NIGERIA said the GM should not be made an alternative secretariat or engage in functions that compete with the Secretariat. Stating its commitment to the Rio Principles and Paris Declaration, NORWAY stressed the prioritization of sustainable land management to qualify for UNCCD financing.

The UAE supported strengthening the RCUs, MAURITANIA expressed commitment to them, and SENEGAL supported making them institutions of the Secretariat.

ARGENTINA emphasized the role that scientific organs, such as the IPCC and CST, have in identifying methods and solutions for combating desertification. NIGER said the CST should do more to ensure scientific knowledge is available to populations. FRANCE said the UNCCD should be the center of knowledge and expertise on desertification. KENYA said the Convention should focus on tools, models and methods that can support the CST’s work.

LYBIA, SYRIA, ALGERIA, and SAUDI ARABIA, among others, supported the proposal for a 2010-2020 decade for combating desertification. QATAR said it would like to host the next COP. ZIMBABWE welcomed the contributions and deliberations emanating from this conference on the preparations for CSD 16 and 17.

DJIBOUTI supported reforms within the GEF that improve equity between the Rio Conventions. TANZANIA highlighted to the GEF the need for capacity building for programme development. JORDAN reiterated the importance of the GEF as the UNCCD’s main financing mechanism, urged for the revitalization of the GM, and called for assistance beyond Africa.

ZAMBIA called on developed country parties to adopt equitable trade incentives that would enable Zambia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to increase their participation in global trade, such as incentives for organic farming products and forest produce.