



UNCCD COP 11 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER

On Wednesday, COP 11 convened in two parallel sessions. The CRIC completed a first reading of reports on communication and reporting, and collaboration with other conventions and international organizations, including the GEF. The CST discussed proposals for improving knowledge management through the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal.

In the afternoon and evening, CRIC, COW and CRIC-CST contact groups met.

CRIC

IMPROVING THE PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION AS WELL AS THE QUALITY AND FORMAT OF REPORTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE COP:

Chair Rowen invited parties to consider the sub-item on “Consideration of the overall report on the fourth reporting and review process” (ICCD/CRIC(12)/7). Introducing the report, Anja Thust, UNCCD Secretariat, highlighted that improvements in methodology, user-friendliness and reporting guidelines are necessary for maintaining internal consistency in the reporting process, noting it is essential to assess progress against comparable datasets.

Many parties, including ALGERIA, JORDAN, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA and COLUMBIA, noted the difficulty of measuring progress given the low number of submissions. SOUTH AFRICA, PANAMA, COSTA RICA, TANZANIA, MOROCCO and THAILAND attributed poor reporting to, among other reasons, the complexity of the PRAIS system and difficulties in collecting data. Many emphasized the need for more human, technological and financial capacity to allow countries to provide information in a timely manner.

GUINEA-BISSAU and BENIN stressed the need for involvement of regional bodies to assist with disaggregated statistics. GUATEMALA underlined the need to adjust PRAIS to enable policy-relevant analyses.

Massimo Candelori, UNCCD Secretariat, introduced reports on: “Promoting the analysis and dissemination of best practices” and “Accessibility of best practices,” (ICCD/CRIC(12)/4-ICCD/COP(11)/CST/7 and ICCD/CRIC(12)/5).

CHINA shared his country’s experience through the Kubuqi International Desert Forum, saying it provides a high-level dialogue platform for an integrated approach to dealing with DLDD, sand industry development, and development of new energy sources. MONGOLIA stressed its importance as an innovative way of implementing the Convention.

BHUTAN proposed regional experience-sharing workshops on PRAIS reporting. ARGENTINA warned about property rights risks in storing information on best practices and SLM on the PRAIS portal. EGYPT urged parties to translate recommendations into action on the ground. SENEGAL urged

regions to enhance dissemination of best practices. CAMBODIA emphasized capacity building and financial support for national reporting.

SWITZERLAND called for the Secretariat to assign responsibility for managing the SLM best practice database to the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT).

PROMOTION AND STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES:

Sergio Zelaya, UNCCD Secretariat, provided an overview of the relevant documents under this agenda item (ICCD/CRIC(11)/19 and Add.1, ICCD/CRIC(12)/INF.1 and ICCD/CRIC(12)/CRP.1).

Parties welcomed efforts to promote synergies among the three Rio Conventions and emphasized focusing on: increasing efficiency and resource mobilization; ensuring national implementation efforts for each convention are complementary; and harmonizing reporting formats. JORDAN proposed assigning a liaison officer to coordinate relationships among all the Conventions’ organs.

ARGENTINA cautioned against the Secretariat’s “non-conventional” approach in elaborating its multidisciplinary documents, referred to as advocacy papers. On advocacy, awareness raising and promotion of the Convention, ZIMBABWE proposed the establishment of an “open and non-political” global platform allowing stakeholders to have a say on DLDD issues and the implementation of the Convention.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) emphasized targets for land degradation neutrality should include safeguards against potential environmental risks. UNDP drew attention to policy recommendations in the Global Drylands Report and called for support for a proposed action plan on drylands.

COLLABORATION WITH THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY: In the morning, delegates considered two sub-items: the GEF report on strategies, programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning desertification; and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNCCD and the GEF (ICCD/CRIC(12)/6). The Secretariat reported a draft proposal of amendments to the MoU will be submitted to the GEF Council and the Secretariat for consideration at COP 12. Several parties called for expanding resource allocations to UNCCD focal points and improving direct accessibility to funds at all levels. COSTA RICA said an alliance with the GEF allowed his country to transfer funds directly to farmers. GUATEMALA asked for a reassessment of co-financing required under the GEF and increased technical support and, with TUNISIA, called for streamlining the bureaucratic process.



CST**IMPROVEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, BEST PRACTICES AND SUCCESS STORIES:**

Opening consideration of the sub-item on the “Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal”, Chair Magalhães invited comments on document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/6 and its progress report (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/INF.4). Elysabeth David, UNCCD Secretariat, reported its aim to develop a “portal of portals” by aggregating knowledge from existing repositories. She reported the current pilot phase aims to: target knowledge users; avoid reinventing the wheel; maximize strengths of partners and networks among repositories; and minimize initial investments through building on existing knowledge sources.

During the ensuing discussion, many parties, including MOROCCO, ARGENTINA, the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, ECUADOR, COSTA RICA and YEMEN raised concerns regarding: internet access at the local level; providing content in all UN languages; and capturing traditional knowledge and local practices. TUNISIA said the objective of the undertaking cannot be achieved without commitment at the national level, and NAMIBIA suggested extending the scope to include mobile applications, which would increase local accessibility. TURKEY suggested countries carry the responsibility of local language translations, and HONDURAS urged greater synergies among existing portals of the UN Conventions. MEXICO, with ITALY and CHINA, called for greater knowledge sharing and synergies at the regional level.

Chair Magalhães introduced the sub-item on “Promoting the analysis and dissemination of best practices,” based on decisions 21/COP.10 and 15/COP.10, and relevant documents (ICCD/CRIC(12)/4 - ICCD/COP(11)/CST/7 and Corr.1 and ICCD/COP(11)/CST/6), and invited CRIC Vice-Chair Hussein Nasrallah (Lebanon) to facilitate the discussion.

MOROCCO welcomed collaboration between CRIC and CST, which he said represents the beginning of an internal SPI. BRAZIL requested elaboration on the CST’s work to recommend relevant topics on which advice would be particularly relevant.

JAPAN called for the UNCCD to build partnerships with relevant decentralized organizations to facilitate knowledge transfer to the lowest level.

ARGENTINA supported calls for increased collaboration with WOCAT but voiced concerns that intellectual property rights regarding best practices of indigenous peoples presented online must be ensured. The US recalled that ownership and control of intellectual property remains in the hands of the countries hosting the information, not with any UNCCD database.

ADVICE ON HOW BEST TO MEASURE PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 1, 2 AND 3 OF THE STRATEGY:

After an introduction by the Secretariat, Gunilla Bjorklund (Sweden), Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Advisory Group of Technical Experts (AGTE) and AGTE member Juan Puigdefabregas (Spain) presented the AGTE’s final recommendations (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/2). They highlighted: operational delineation of affected areas; global, national and local indicators; a conceptual indicator-integration framework; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; linking across scales; and technical and resource requirements for current and future work.

In the ensuing discussion, the EU suggested using global indicators in the absence of national data. The US called for further clarification of indicators before adoption, saying “details do matter.” JAPAN urged refining definitions and methodologies to exclude arbitrariness, and ensuring the reliability of storyline sources.

ALGERIA suggested looking at other existing indicators such as those used by the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS). INDIA complimented the AGTE’s work on creating a “nuanced, differentiated approach to global, national and local indicators,” and opined that low levels of reporting are due to a lack of appropriate datasets and of understanding of affected areas.

SUDAN, MOROCCO, CUBA and EGYPT indicated that definitions of affected areas should be broad, and all components of recommendation 1 on operational delineation of affected areas be mandatory. ARGENTINA warned that these suggestions would include categories outside the mandate of the UNCCD.

The PHILIPPINES proposed defining and considering seasonal aridity, which his country suffers from.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) described its efforts to combat drought. FAO indicated the importance of the AGTE’s discussion of multilevel indicators and requested more work be undertaken on this topic.

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

Chair Magalhães then introduced Richard Escadafal, speaking on behalf of the Scientific and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development consortium, who presented on preparations for the UNCCD’s 3rd Scientific Conference on “Combating DLDD for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices” (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/5).

Escadafal indicated that most of the consortium’s work to date has been undertaken without UNCCD funding and due to this lack of funding, the consortium currently cannot continue work on preparing the conference, which will now likely be delayed until April 2015.

In response to an inquiry from YEMEN, the Secretariat explained the scientific conferences and the consortium are funded by extra budgetary funds, and that there is currently no sustainable source of funding for them.

CONTACT GROUPS

The COW contact group on housing arrangements for the GM convened in the afternoon. After ITALY presented a list of questions on the Secretariat’s report, Facilitator Aho informed parties that the Secretariat’s response would be discussed in the contact group session on Thursday. In the COW contact group on budget matters, delegates began consideration of draft text on means of financing.

In the afternoon, the CRIC contact group drafted preambular language on strengthening and enhancing alignment and implementation of action programmes with the Strategy. Parties reiterated the difficulty of accessing financing for NAPs, with some stressing the need to simplify the process. Among issues raised were: whether specific funding agencies should be named; whether to specify predictable financing; and how to address shared responsibility or interest in the alignment process.

The CST contact group met during the evening where discussions continued on ways of enabling UNCCD to become the leading authority on DLDD scientific research. Facilitator Hanley expressed hope that participants will come to an agreement on the basics of creating a platform to distil current research and knowledge, a topic that formed the main focus of discussion.

The joint CRIC-CST contact group also met in the evening to discuss methods to measure progress on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the Strategy.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While many participants spoke of a promising start to CST discussions on improving international collaboration to strengthen links between science, policy and practice, the mood in the CRIC tent was reported to be more contentious. One observer there noted that the initial focus on opportunities for mobilizing additional resources through enhanced synergies among the Rio Conventions had shifted to a focus on the imbalances among them, and many pondered India’s observation that his country received 63% of total GEF funds for climate change and less than 1% for DLDD-related activities.

Meanwhile in the COW contact groups, some commented on the appearance of a bidding race to host the GM.