



UNCCD COP 12 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2015

On the second day of the two-week meeting, UNCCD COP 12 participants conducted initial discussions on agenda items for the Committee of the Whole (COW), Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and Committee on Science and Technology (CST). Contact groups were established by each body to elaborate draft decisions for consideration by the COP.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The COW elected Thomas Tichelmann (Ireland) as COW Chair.

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: The Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(12)/5-7, INF.4-5 and ICCD/CRIC(14)/2, noting the Secretariat’s proposal for a zero nominal growth budget.

The AFRICAN GROUP emphasized matching the budget to the proposed activities and, with CHINA, called for increased efforts by the Secretariat to secure voluntary contributions. SWAZILAND, BRAZIL, UGANDA, TANZANIA and others requested reviewing all planned activities before adopting the budget. SWAZILAND, ARGENTINA, IRAQ, JORDAN and CHINA called for regional balance in Secretariat posts. SWAZILAND and ARGENTINA cautioned against reducing senior staff positions. ARGENTINA, CUBA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, INDIA and others called for financing regional meetings through the budget. The EU, JAPAN, CHINA and the US welcomed the zero nominal growth budget. BRAZIL, CUBA and others noted that the budget did not provide for capacity building and technology transfer activities. INDIA underscored the importance of funding for achieving the LDN target.

EVALUATION REPORTS: The Secretariat introduced the evaluation office reports (ICCD/COP(12)/5 and INF.4), highlighting evaluations of UNCCD communication activities and of partnerships involving the Secretariat and the GM. The EU welcomed the creation of the evaluation office and its proposed programme of work.

POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/4, stressing that the SDGs and targets are universally applicable, taking into account national contexts and priorities.

The CEE, TURKEY, MOROCCO, PERU, the EU, TANZANIA and EGYPT supported a definition of LDN for all lands. BRAZIL noted that the LDN scope is defined as “arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.”

ARGENTINA, CUBA, COLOMBIA, NAMIBIA and MEXICO called for technical and financial support for LDN implementation and monitoring. CHINA highlighted the need for scaling up LDN pilot projects. INDONESIA preferred a country-driven approach to LDN. The PHILIPPINES proposed

integrating LDN into National Action Programmes (NAPs). The US emphasized good preparation to minimize the risk of failure and further degradation.

IUCN called for LDN to be achieved at a scale that maintains biodiversity. CIVIL SOCIETY stressed LDN should not affect land rights.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS: The Secretariat introduced the request by Armenia, for CEE, seeking clarification on the mandate and scope of the Convention regarding land degradation and the legal aspects for its implementation in territories not related to arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas (ICCD/COP(12)/16).

CEE, supported by UKRAINE, recalled that land degradation occurs in all areas and noted that ambiguity in the term “affected countries and territories” undermines work on LDN. BRAZIL, ARGENTINA and COLOMBIA stressed that the UNCCD’s focus is on the most vulnerable areas and limited resources should not be diverted from these areas. The AFRICAN STATES supported finding a solution without compromising the Convention’s primary focus. MEXICO supported extending the land degradation concept to all areas.

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL: The Secretariat presented proposed amendments to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNCCD and the GEF (ICCD/COP(12)/18).

BRAZIL, the EU and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA requested access to the MoU before considering amendments.

Markus Repnik, Managing Director, GM, introduced the GM’s vision and future direction (ICCD/COP(12)/6-7 and ICCD/CRIC(14)/2), focusing on: scale and impact, strategic partnerships and tapping finances; trust; and accountability.

The COW established a programme and budget contact group, to be facilitated by A.K. Mehta (India). The joint COW/CRIC contact group on programme and budget met in the evening.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC 14 Chair Richard Mwendandu (Kenya) opened the session and invited opening statements. The EU supported national LDN targets and further streamlining of the CRIC reporting process, including through closer alignment with the CST’s work. South Africa, for the AFRICAN STATES, called for support to integrate the LDN target with the Strategy and extend the pilot LDN project to other countries. Bhutan, for ASIA PACIFIC STATES, suggested that technical support could include best practice guidelines. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, for GRULAC, supported a biennial reporting schedule with adequate, timely and effective allocation of financial and technical resources. Georgia, for CEE, cautioned against making “radical changes” in a post-2018 strategy, so as



not to undermine work already completed. CARI, on behalf of CSOs, commended Switzerland for support to the Civil Society Panel and called for additional support to build on the Panel's achievements.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Delegates adopted the proposed agenda and schedule of work (ICCD/CRIC(14)/1 and Annex 2) without amendment.

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT THE NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS: Multi-year Workplans of the Convention Institutions and Subsidiary Bodies: The Secretariat introduced the comprehensive multi-year work plan and the costed two-year work programme (ICCD/COP(12)/6, ICCD/CRIC(14)/2 and Corr.1). She noted that the reports have been streamlined into one results-oriented document focusing on the Convention's Strategic Objectives.

Performance of the Convention Institutions and Subsidiary Bodies: The Secretariat introduced the document for the 2014-15 biennium (ICCD/CRIC(14)/3). BRAZIL expressed concern that some of the priority areas in the Strategy are not reflected in the work programme and questioned the rationale for expanding the Convention's remit towards resilience, security and trade issues. ARGENTINA noted the need to first arrive at a consensus on the concept of LDN, and cautioned against prejudging the outcomes of other Rio Convention COPs in discussions on synergies.

Trends in Implementation of the Convention, Including Review of the CRIC 13 Report: The Secretariat introduced the CRIC 13 report (ICCD/CRIC(13)/9). BRAZIL requested a more detailed description of the budget to improve transparency on resource use.

Formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 development agenda: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(14)/4 on the NAP alignment process and options for streamlining it with the SDGs. He stated that a decision on LDN could provide a "systematic and coherent method" to monitor and evaluate progress, and highlighted a GEF pledge of US\$431 million towards this end. SWAZILAND highlighted linkages between the COW and the CRIC on the LDN target and suggested that they address the issue jointly. TURKEY noted that it will be difficult for countries to finalize their LDN targets within two years, as they first need to establish baselines. COLOMBIA suggested that national LDN targets should focus on a 2030 timeline, and include relevant parameters and indicators. BRAZIL called for LDN goals that are country-driven, aspirational and voluntary, with sufficient means of implementation. ARGENTINA said it is premature to take definite decisions and cautioned against the adoption of market mechanism to the detriment of social or environmental goals. SWITZERLAND stressed that any LDN fund should support local communities and adhere to the Committee on World Food Security guidelines on responsible financial investments.

Delegates established a CRIC contact group, chaired by Richard Mwendandu (Kenya), to begin consideration of the issues raised.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Uriel Safriel (Israel), CST 12 Chair, opened the CST and reviewed the UNCCD's history in grappling with how to develop science-based recommendations for land use issues, which led to the COP 11 decision to develop the SPI.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/1/Rev. 1) without comment.

Delegates established a contact group with Matthias Magunda (Uganda) as its facilitator. The CST also agreed that the CST and CRIC contact groups would discuss progress indicators and best practices and knowledge management together. The CG met in the evening.

OUTCOMES OF THE UNCCD 3rd SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE: The CST then considered the report of CST S-4 (ICCD/CST(S-4)/3) and the report from the CST Bureau on the outcomes and recommendations from the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/2). Delegates adopted the report of CST S-4 without comment.

Barron Orr (US), Rapporteur of the SPI, facilitated a discussion with the organizers of the Scientific Conference and SPI members. Richard Escadafal, Scientific & Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development (STK4SD) Consortium, which organized the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, and William Payne (US), Scientific Advisory Committee Chair, reviewed the collaborative and peer review processes involved with the Conference, and its findings. Elena Abraham (Argentina) and Joris de Vente (Spain), SPI, presented the SPI's process to identify findings from the Conferences and reviewed the policy-oriented recommendations, including: strengthening the SKBP; analyzing drought management experiences; and exploring the potential for a Global Drylands Observing System.

LIBERIA noted that the report does not offer recommendations on translating policy into local-level action and indicators. MOROCCO and ARGENTINA commented that the recommendations were not being addressed by the CRIC. ARGENTINA also applauded the progress towards a real interface between science and policy under the Convention. With SENEGAL and BENIN, she suggested that economic studies should consider more than just the cost of inaction. SWITZERLAND said more work is necessary to develop stronger policy-relevant recommendations. SENEGAL suggested that greater efforts were needed to address concerns from specific regions. MEXICO, supported by the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, suggested presenting the recommendations to the COP 12 High-Level Segment and in a side event at CBD COP 13.

KUWAIT said the three focal areas of the 3rd Scientific Conference – diagnosis, responses and monitoring – were covered to differing degrees, and called for more focus on responses. BENIN suggested a study on the social impacts of desertification. BRAZIL emphasized including adaptation measures, in particular on water security. The US requested the Secretariat to provide information on the cost implications of the proposals. INDIA suggested that the use of NAPs be reflected in a proposal on land-based adaptation interventions to address climate change. CSOs called for greater involvement of CSOs in future scientific conferences.

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/CST/4 and INF.2. Matthias Magunda (Uganda) and Mariam Akhtar-Schuster (Germany) presented the proposed mechanisms to integrate science into the policy-making process. Recommendations included having the COP decide specific Scientific Conference themes and independent peer review.

IN THE CORRIDORS

By Tuesday evening, UNCCD COP 12 delegates had concluded their initial discussion of many issues and began settling into contact groups. Participants pointed to exchanges in the morning COW session as a prelude of two issues they expected to spend time focusing on during the next two weeks: the budget and how to turn the concept of LDN into practice. Discussion of the latter issue was also picked up at side events, including regarding preliminary results from a pilot project to develop LDN indicators and policy frameworks in 14 countries and policy research priorities on achieving LDN as identified by scientific communities. As the Secretariat presented its proposal for a zero nominal growth budget, however, some countries questioned the absence of budget lines for capacity building and other activities they expected to prioritize during the COP.