COP 13 #4

IISD REPORTING SERVICES

Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 4 No. 272 **Online at: http://enb.iisd.org/desert/cop13/** Saturday, 9 September 2017

UNCCD COP 13 HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2017

UNCCD COP 13 participants reconvened in the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) in parallel sessions in the morning to discuss agenda items, with the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting in plenary in the afternoon. Negotiations in contact groups continued on draft decisions related to the COP, CRIC and CST agendas.

CRIC

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS: Securing of additional investment and relations with financial mechanisms: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(16)/4 and invited the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to provide a more detailed overview of its strategies, programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning desertification.

Chizuru Aoki, the GEF, noted the report covers the 2nd and 3rd year of the sixth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-6), with approved Land Degradation Focal Area (LDFA) projects contributing around 34 million ha, accounting for 28% of the GEF-6 corporate target. She cited some findings of the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF, which found, *inter alia*, that these projects were "highly relevant and effective in producing global environmental benefits."

In the ensuing discussion, many countries expressed appreciation for the GEF's support. Describing the report as highly informative, the EU welcomed the substantial progress made in implementing COP 12 decisions. He highlighted, as one of the largest contributors to the GEF, it was gratified with the positive response, and reported that the UNCCD will enjoy priority under GEF-7.

Many countries, including EGYPT, ETHIOPIA, IRAQ, ERITREA, BHUTAN, SRI LANKA, BANGLADESH, and BOLIVIA, called for follow up funding at the conclusion of the land degradation neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Programme. CÔTE D'IVOIRE and ARGENTINA asked for clarification about the modalities of future support.

ARMENIA, SYRIA, and EGYPT highlighted the need to support drought programmes, also pointing to the importance of greater flexibility in disbursing funds to ensure timely responses.

COSTA RICA said the report shows the importance of GEF assistance in light of parties' continued calls for additional support from the Secretariat. BHUTAN stated that its two GEF-funded sustainable land management (SLM) projects have been recognized as best practices, providing a good basis for implementing LDN projects.

Responding to questions on future support modalities, Aoki said countries are free to choose from among 18 UN partner agencies, as well as from international or national NGOs. On systematic ways to evaluate agencies, she pointed to the independent long-term LDFA evaluation.

THE UNCCD REPORTING AND REVIEW PROCESS IN VIEW OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD: Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents ICCD/CRIC(16)/5 and ICCD/CRIC(16)/INF.1.

Sven Walter, Global Mechanism (GM), presented on UN Environment and GM support for UNCCD reporting, and said the UNCCD has become a pioneer in online reporting.

David Oswald, DE Design+Environment, discussed integrated environmental monitoring across national to regional scales and its implications for UNCCD reporting, risk management and resilience, highlighting lessons learned from the Caribbean.

UKRAINE, KIRIBATI, ZAMBIA and THE PHILIPPINES, questioned the ability of parties to complete their reporting by CRIC 17, with SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN and SYRIA asking for the time frame to be extended.

Many parties highlighted the need to strengthen capacity for reporting, with KIRIBATI proposing that, given the diversity of some regions, it is preferable to offer such support at the sub-regional level. ZAMBIA highlighted that capacity building for reporting should be considered an ongoing process. SAINT LUCIA outlined efforts to develop a national environmental monitoring system. VENEZUELA argued that the reports need further simplification, in accordance with previous COP decisions.

In response, the Secretariat noted, *inter alia*, that capacity building is an ongoing process through programmes such as the Umbrella Project and the Global Support Programme. Explaining that the reporting timeline was decided at COP 12 to coincide with CRIC 17, she said the LDN Target Setting Programme should support parties with the reporting template.

COW

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS: Additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention – Terms of Reference for the CRIC: Chair Nosipho Ngcaba (South Africa) opened the session. The Secretariat presented document ICCD/COP(13)/5 and explained that the most significant changes proposed related to the frequency of reporting and the reporting entities.

UKRAINE, with the EU, supported the proposed four-year integrative reporting cycle, further underlining CRIC's role as a permanent subsidiary body of the Convention. The EU called for more discussion on the organization and thematic focus of intersessional meetings.

Chair Ngcaba said discussion of these issues will continue in the CRIC contact group.

Promotion and strengthening of the relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies: The UNCCD Secretariat introduced

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Suzi Malan, Ph.D., Dina Hestad, Wangu Mwangi, Laura Russo, Kelly Sharp, and Jessica Wang. The Digital Editor is Francis Dejon. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org>. The Director of IISD Reporting Services is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* is published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are the European Union (EU) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. General Support for the *Bulletin* during 2017 is provided by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, Japanese Ministry of Environment (through the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies - IGES), New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Switzerland (Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), and SWAN International. Specific funding for coverage of this meeting has been provided by the People's Republic of China. Funding for translation of the *Bulletin* into French has been provided by the Government of France, Québec, and the International Organization of La Francophonie/Institute for Sustainable Development of La Francophonie (IOF/IFDD). The opinions expressed in the *Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD or other donors. Excerpts from the *Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications with appropriate academic citation. For information on the *Bulletin*, including requests to provide reporting services, contact the Director of IISD Reporting Services at <kimo@iisd.org>, +1-646-536-7556 or 300 East 56th St., 11D, New York, NY 10022 USA. The ENB team at UNCCD COP 13 can be contacted by e-mail at <suzi@iisd.org>.

documents ICCD/COP (13)/19, ICCD/COP(13)/CRP.1 and ICCD/COP(13)/CRP.2, containing the proposed draft advocacy policy frameworks on gender, drought, and sand and dust storms.

South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by, among others, SAUDI ARABIA, LEBANON and BOLIVIA, called for a binding protocol to strengthen resilience, capacity building and poverty eradication. EQUATORIAL GUINEA suggested including flood preparedness. The EU highlighted the importance of institutional partnerships to, *inter alia*, enhance the expertise of the UNCCD and the sharing of best practices. CANADA lauded the focus on women.

JAPAN, COLOMBIA, VENEZUELA and CUBA recommended focusing on preparedness. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA stressed the importance of prevention and adaptation measures in non-arid countries. UN Environment, UN WOMEN and the WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION offered their continued cooperation with UNCCD on these issues.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Any other matters deemed to be appropriate: The EU and SENEGAL tabled a draft decision on sustainable, inclusive growth and stability, recognizing the role of SLM in preventing conflict and migration. The proposal garnered support from EGYPT, BURKINA FASO, FRANCE, SOMALIA, ITALY, NIGER, GAMBIA, SAUDI ARABIA, NIGERIA, SUDAN, GERMANY and CAPE VERDE. BRAZIL urged more timely access to the draft decision, and stated that they do not consider international peace and security to be within the mandate of the Convention, supported by ARGENTINA and PERU. URUGUAY and VENEZUELA supported Brazil on the procedural point. SOUTH AFRICA supported the draft decision in principle, but said its scope is too wide. BOLIVIA added that the proposed decisions would require revising the scope of the Convention.

GUYANA tabled a draft decision on institutionalizing capacity building, which was supported by SAINT LUCIA, GRENADA, DOMINICA, and ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA.

Chair Ngcaba proposed establishing an open-ended Friends of the Chair group to discuss these proposals, but AUSTRALIA, supported by several countries, including SWITZERLAND, TURKEY, CANADA and the US, expressed concern about the growing workload for delegations.

SWITZERLAND remarked that delegates will also need to consider draft text for the ministerial declaration, and suggested discussing these matters in the COW contact group on non-budget matters. Several countries suggested that there should be no overlaps among the diverse contact groups.

In closing, Chair Ngcaba reported that the EU had nominated Patrick Wegerdt, European Commission, as facilitator of the budget contact group.

CST

INTERFACING SCIENCE AND POLICY, AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE: Review of the Science-Policy Interface and its achievements: The Secretariat introduced this item (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/6), and highlighted that the external assessment of the SPI recommended: formalizing the interactions of SPI with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); refining SPI membership criteria; and limiting the SPI work programme to 1–2 priority topics.

All interventions commended the work done by the SPI. MOROCCO emphasized improving the interface between policy and science and giving parties greater opportunity to review SPI results. US underscored the benefits of the SPI scientific support compared to previous arrangements and urged collaboration with other bodies rather than setting limited priorities for its work programme. ARGENTINA, supported by JORDAN, KYRGYZSTAN and SOUTH AFRICA, suggested improved regional balance in the SPI membership and, supported by Georgia, on behalf of CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (CEE), with MICRONESIA, emphasized the need for improved communication with country focal points. ISRAEL cautioned against a large membership increase. JAPAN recommended the SPI focus on global priorities for realistic results in a limited timeframe, offering contribution from their experts. EU supported extending the mandate of the SPI up to the end of COP 16. MEXICO called for briefing notes on SPI results for decision makers, while JORDAN proposed improved exchanges among stakeholders. NORWAY suggested building on existing networks, and CSOs and IRAQ called for a greater role of CSOs and opportunities for their participation.

Work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2018-2019: The Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(13)/CST/7 and ICCD/COP(13)/CST/INF.2. Many countries expressed support for the work programme of the SPI for 2018-2019, with SOUTH AFRICA raising a concern about the budget gap of EUR 205,000 and suggesting that the CST and UNCCD seek recommendations to fill this gap. SWITZERLAND, the EU and the US welcomed continued coordination with other scientific bodies to strengthen the scientific foundation of the SPI and reduce inefficiencies.

On the focus of the SPI's work, MEXICO, EL SALVADOR, BOLIVIA, VENEZUELA and NAMIBIA requested that special attention is given to research on drought and how it increases vulnerability, and KUWAIT and SAUDI ARABIA for a focus on sand and dust storms. CSOs requested that local issues are considered to a greater extent in developing guidance on LDN.

Promoting the analysis, dissemination and accessibility of best practices and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP (13)/CST/ 8, and presented the UNCCD Knowledge Hub and the Global Database on SLM of the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT).

ARGENTINA recommended that unofficial information in the Knowledge Hub be kept distinct from official information from countries. SOUTH AFRICA announced the establishment of the African WOCAT. US noted the Knowledge Hub should not create its own database, but rather facilitate access to existing ones.

KENYA suggested the use of indigenous knowledge and previous research conducted in Africa to enhance reporting on desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). JAPAN proposed that each country updates its national reports directly through the national focal points. PAKISTAN recommended including NGO publications in WOCAT, and CHINA requested that NGOs be incorporated into the Knowledge Hub.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Programme of work for the fourteenth session of the CST: CST Chair Čustovič introduced this agenda item, which did not receive any comments from delegates.

CONTACT GROUPS

COW Contact Group on other matters: Delegates started deliberations on the integration of SDG 15 and target 15.3 into the implementation of the UNCCD.

COW Contact Group on Budget: The contact group on programme and budget met during the day.

CST: Delegates met on improving the efficiency of the SPI, cooperation with other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies, and the work programme of the SPI for 2018-2019.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the first Friday of COP 13 was ushered in by the now familiar soothing tunes of traditional Ordos music, the Youth Forum was in full swing outside the plenary halls, with an added touch of glamour provided by the presence of Inner Mongolia-born TV anchor Liu Fangfei. Perhaps inspired by the upbeat mood, CST delegates managed to finish the main agenda items a day early, also signaling widespread satisfaction with the achievements of the SPI in its trial period since COP 12. Nonetheless, in the eyes of some delegates, the much-heralded scientific results were tinged with a sense of lost opportunity for the SPI to fully play its "interface" role, as was intended by COP 12.

By now, even the serious number crunchers had begun to tap their feet to the infectious notes, as the budget and programme contact group finally found a bandleader and appeared determined to make up for lost time.

Not to be undone, the CRIC danced efficiently along, discussing finance and reporting, although given the chance some might have wanted to continue grooving with the reporting format past CRIC 17.