

## EIGHTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 3-14 SEPTEMBER 2007

The eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will convene in Madrid, Spain, from 3-14 September 2007. In addition to the work of the COP, UNCCD parties will also conduct the sixth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 6) from 4-7 September 2007, and the eighth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 8) from 4-6 September 2007. Additional events will include a dialogue session with members of parliament, from 8-9 September, and a special segment on 12-13 September, which will feature a dialogue among high-level officials on the theme "Desertification and adaptation to climate change."

As the UNCCD begins its second decade, the COP will address a number of agenda items that could result in a refocusing of the Convention. These items include the arrangements for regional coordination units, programme and budget for 2008-2009, and the follow-up to the Joint Inspection Unit report and strategy development to foster the implementation of the Convention, based on the work of the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) that was established at COP 7. The CRIC is expected to consider the report of CRIC 5, review the policies, operational modalities, activities and execution of the Global Mechanism's function, and consider reports on the collaboration with the Global Environment Facility. The CST will discuss a report on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST and the effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation, among other agenda items.

### 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.

**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 achievements included 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, including the establishment of the CRIC, identification of modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and support for a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

**CRIC 1:** CRIC 1 convened at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002. Delegates considered presentations from the five UNCCD regions and addressed seven thematic issues. 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:** COP 6 met from 25 August - 6 September 2003, in Havana, Cuba. The CST and CRIC met concurrently 26-29 August. Delegates designated the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD and identified criteria for the COP 7 review of the CRIC, in addition to other decisions, including on: activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies; and follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The CST discussed improving its efficiency and effectiveness, among other agenda items.

**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 recommendations for the future work of the Convention.

**COP 7:** COP 7 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17-28 October 2005. The CST met from 18-21 October and the CRIC met from 18-27 October. Participants reviewed the implementation of the Convention, developed an MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF, adopted the programme and budget for the 2006-2007 biennium, and reviewed the recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the UN, among other agenda items. A proposal to add an agenda item on the procedure for the selection of an Executive Secretary was not

accepted and discussion on the regional coordination units ended without the adoption of a decision. The CST considered land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation, among other issues.

### INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**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). Conferences and seminars organized by governments and intergovernmental and research organizations were held throughout 2006 in Europe, North America, Africa and Asia, on topics ranging from sustainable land management, to promoting the participation of civil society in the UNCCD, to women and youth and desertification.

### DESERTIFICATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL

**POLICY IMPERATIVE:** This Conference, which convened 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. Ministers from Arab countries presented a proposal requesting that the UN General Assembly (UNGA) declare 2010-2020 as the decade of deserts and desertification.

Algeria presented this proposal to the 24th session of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (5-9 February 2007, Nairobi, Kenya), which adopted a decision recommending that UNGA declare, during its 62nd session, the decade 2010-2020 as the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification.

**CRIC 5:** The fifth session of the CRIC convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 12-21 March 2007, to review implementation of the Convention in affected country parties in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe. Much of the meeting was devoted to panel presentations and discussions on selected topics, such as the promotion of technology transfer and know-how, sustainable land management, early warning systems, financial resource mobilization, synergies with other conventions, rehabilitation of degraded lands, and the promotion of new and renewable energy sources. The meeting also addressed how to improve information communication and national reporting, reviewed the 2006 IYDD, and conducted a Global Interactive Dialogue with stakeholders on investments in rural areas in the context of combating land degradation and desertification.

**IIWG:** Following a COP 7 decision, an Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) convened four times from May 2006 - May 2007 with the mandate to review the JIU report and to develop a draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention. The report of the IIWG's review of the JIU's recommendations and the draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention have been forwarded to COP 8 for its consideration.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RESIGNATION:** Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, resigned effective 19 June 2007, following his election as a member of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso. The UN Secretary-General issued a call for applications in July and conducted interviews for the position during the last week of August. In a letter to the Bureau, dated 1 September 2007, the Secretary-General forwarded his selection of Luc-Marie Gnacadja (Benin) as the new Executive Secretary, for confirmation by the Bureau.

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2007

The eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) opened at the Palacio de Congresos in Madrid, Spain, on Monday, 3 September 2007. Following a welcoming ceremony under the aegis of the Crown Prince and Princess of Spain, the first plenary meeting of the two-week session heard opening statements from representatives of regional groups, UN agencies and organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

### OPENING CEREMONY

COP 8 was called to order at 12:03 pm. In his opening remarks, Grégoire de Kalbermatten, the Convention Secretariat's Officer-in-Charge, welcomed the Prince and Princess of Asturias, paid tribute to former UNCCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo, and said COP 8 is a defining moment in the UNCCD's evolution given recent climatic events and progress in developing the UNCCD implementation strategy.

David Mwiraria (Kenya), President of COP 7, paid tribute to Diallo. He highlighted the ten-year strategic plan and the programme and budget for 2008-2009 as two of the most important items to be addressed at COP 8.

Alberto Ruiz Gallardón, Mayor of Madrid, welcomed participants to Madrid and elaborated the city's model to combat desertification, which aims to improve the quality of life, enhance the efficient use of water and increase Madrid's green areas.

Cristina Narbona, Minister for the Environment of Spain, noted that her country has doubled its ODA and increased its support to Africa, and committed to further support affected countries in their efforts to combat desertification. She called for exploring new financial instruments and initiatives for furthering implementation of the Convention at COP 8.

Felipe de Borbón, Prince of Asturias, welcomed participants to Spain, detailed Spain's longstanding efforts to combat land degradation, and described the local and global links in the causes of, and solutions to, the desertification problem.

### OPENING PLENARY

COP 7 President Mwiraria declared open COP 8. Delegates elected Minister Narbona as COP 8 President by acclamation. Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten presented an overview of the Secretariat's work since COP 7. He acknowledged

Chair Moore's role in making CRIC 5 a success and said the Secretariat looks forward to enhanced cooperation with the Global Mechanism (GM).

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK:** COP 8 President Narbona invited delegates to consider the document on Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(8)/1 and Corr.1), and noted two changes proposed by the Bureau: a new sub-item to add under item 14 (IYDD) on the decade of deserts and combating desertification (2010-2020); and a renamed agenda item 10 (regional coordination units, RCUs). The agenda was adopted as orally revised.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE PRESIDENT:** President Narbona invited delegates to elect nine vice-presidents and a chair of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). The COP elected Sem Shikongo (Namibia), Siddarth Behura (India), Khaled al-Sharaa (Syria), Jiří Hlavacek (Czech Republic), Yurie Kolmaz (Ukraine), and Mary Rowen (US). The Secretariat noted that the Latin America and Caribbean Group had nominated Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay, but the representatives' names had not yet been presented to the Bureau. Uganda said Tunisia would provide the name of the African Group's second representative. Delegates elected William Dar (The Philippines) as CST Chair, and noted that Franklin Moore (US) had been elected to chair CRIC 5 and 6.

Delegates then established a Committee of the Whole (COW). President Narbona noted that the Bureau had changed the COW's programme of work to allow more time for discussion of agenda item 9 (follow-up of the JIU and strategy development). Discussion of this agenda item and agenda item 6 (RCUs) will begin on Tuesday morning, 4 September, and discussion on the programme and budget will begin on Friday, 7 September.

**ACCREDITATION OF ORGANIZATIONS AND ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS:** Delegates adopted the document on Accreditation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, admission of observers (ICCD/COP(8)/14 and Add.1) without comment.

**STATEMENTS BY PARTIES, AGENCIES AND OBSERVERS:** In their opening remarks, delegations paid tribute to the work of former Executive Secretary Diallo. Many also emphasized their desire to work together cordially and constructively during COP 8.

PAKISTAN, on behalf of the G-77/China, said that the Group is happy with the progress made in the UNCCD. He welcomed the work done by the Intersessional Intergovernmental Working Group (IIWG), supported the GM as a useful tool, and expressed the belief that the improved Secretariat will enhance UNCCD implementation. He appealed to developed countries to fulfill their obligations by providing adequate financial resources to developing countries, and invited the GEF to strengthen its focal area on land degradation and allocate more resources in the next replenishment. He also called for parties to adopt the programme and budget of the Secretariat for 2008-2009. He highlighted the importance of integrating UNCCD implementation in climate change adaptation programmes. With the ten-year strategic plan in place, he said he believed that COP 8 will be an historical conference.

PORTUGAL, on behalf of the European Union, Turkey and Croatia, highlighted the importance of desertification and drought within Europe. He stated that political support for the UNCCD requires a more streamlined and strategic approach, which can be achieved only if the ten-year strategic plan is adopted. He noted that the COP is at a decisive phase and that its institutional framework must be determined. He called for stronger interaction with the other Rio Conventions.

BELARUS, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe, stated his region's support for the ten-year strategic plan and highlighted the need for significant financial resources. He called for strengthening GEF activities and an enhanced role for the GM in mobilizing resources. He expressed hope that the CRIC will be retained as an institution within the UNCCD and that it will present clear and specific recommendations to the COP. He called for reforms to increase the importance of scientific work carried out by the CST.

UGANDA, on behalf of the African Group, said COP 8 should focus on strategies for enhancing the implementation of the Convention, and should substantially increase resources to the Secretariat. He welcomed the outcomes of the IIWG and the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on national reporting, and suggested that COP 8 mandate the Secretariat to facilitate the production of reporting guidelines, with a view to making them available by COP 9. He also emphasized the importance of the CST's programme of work and arrangements for the RCUs.

PARAGUAY, on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean Group, complimented the work done by the IIWG, and stressed the need to finance the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan. He supported the modalities suggested in the draft plan including strengthening the CST and CRIC as well as strengthening the regional programmes. He highlighted the need for a sufficient budget for the Secretariat and appealed to all parties to adopt measures related to adaptation to climate change.

MYANMAR, on behalf of Asia and the Pacific, stated that the ten-year strategic plan "opens a way for renewed commitment among stakeholders." He encouraged parties to: identify targets to optimize the reporting and monitoring process and identify bottlenecks; establish an information clearing house mechanism within the Convention; and give the CRIC permanent status. He called for broader collaboration between the Secretariat and the GM and expressed his region's interest in following the issue of results-based management as well as its support for a four-year reporting cycle where all parties submit reports simultaneously.

CANADA implored parties to achieve results and progress at COP 8. He stressed that COP 8 is a pivotal session that represents an opportunity to work together to shift the UNCCD in the direction of measurable progress, which he said was only possible if we "put the past behind us and look forward." He emphasized "quality before quantity" and said the move to a

results-based management approach will be the key. He said support for the ten-year strategic plan and commitment to its adoption will be a critical measure of this COP's success and a determining factor in his country's assessment of the value of future participation.

UN Environment Programme outlined his organization's activities to support UNCCD implementation, including: celebrating the 2006 World Environment Day with the theme of deserts and desertification; developing and implementing projects; and developing indicators on land degradation and desertification. He highlighted the importance of understanding, mitigating and adapting to climate change in relation to combating desertification. The Food and Agriculture Organization suggested measures to improve integration of national action programme activities with government development programmes, and encouraged promoting partnerships for large-scale financing.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reported on a WMO-organized meeting in 2006 on climate and desertification, during which participants offered recommendations to effectively use climate information to better understand how climate influences and induces land degradation. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction highlighted that the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action seeks to build the resilience of communities and countries to hazards such as drought that can weaken livelihoods and sustainable development.

Fundación IPADE, Spain, on behalf of NGOs, noted that desertification is causing poverty and conflicts in countries. She appealed to donors to contribute new and additional financial resources and noted that the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan is the "last chance." IUCN - The World Conservation Union highlighted the need to better understand community management approaches and expressed hope that COP 8 would give "better attention" to civil society involvement.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

In their morning meetings, regional groups considered the nomination by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon of Benin's Luc-Marie Gnacadja as the next UNCCD Executive Secretary. Many delegations acknowledged that he is well qualified, having served as Environment Minister, studied at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and acquired significant private sector and managerial experience. However, they were puzzled by the selection process, saying that greater transparency would have been desirable and expressed surprise at the rush to find a new Executive Secretary. Few delegations had heard of Gnacadja or knew that he was in the running until Ban Ki-Moon announced his nomination. Some noted that the appointment of an African was probably inevitable, following Ban Ki-Moon's announcement in July of his intention to abolish the post of Under-Secretary-General and Special Advisor on Africa, which upset the African diplomatic community in New York. Some suggested they would have preferred to see greater regional balance, including within Africa, in the appointment. Despite the procedural flaws, delegates remarked that Gnacadja's appointment may give the Convention a second chance for success because he is not a controversial candidate. Some highlighted that Gnacadja's first challenge will be to re-build the trust that was lost between the Secretariat and parties, especially at COP 7 following contention over the Secretariat's budget.

Meanwhile, after the opening ceremony, star-struck participants enjoyed the presence of the Crown Prince and Princess during a reception. Many stood in concentric circles around the royal couple, content to gawk, while a few took surreptitious photos or even ventured close to shake their hands.

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 met in a morning plenary session to complete the election of COP officers, following which they convened in the Committee of the Whole (COW) and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) for the remainder of the day.

### PLENARY

COP 8 Vice-President Jiří Hlaváček invited delegates to select the remaining vice-presidents for the COP. Hamdi Aloui (Tunisia), Kenneth Roach (Trinidad and Tobago) and Ariel Rusignol (Uruguay) were elected by acclamation, and join the vice-presidents selected Monday: Sem Shikongo (Namibia), Siddharth Behura (India), Khaled al-Sharaa (Syria), Jiří Hlaváček (Czech Republic), Yurie Kolmaz (Ukraine), and Mary Rowen (US). Hlaváček then designated Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) as Chair of the COW. The designation of the Rapporteur was left pending.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Committee, chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria), adopted its agenda and organization of work as contained in paragraph 11 of the Provisional agenda and annotations (ICCD/COP(8)/1), without amendment. The COW also agreed to consider the CRIC agenda on the comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat together with document ICCD/CRIC(6)/2 by the same title. The Secretariat introduced the agenda items on the follow-up to the JIU report and strategy development to foster the implementation of the Convention (ICCD/COP(8)/10 and ICCD/COP(8)/INF.5), and on regional coordination units (ICCD/COP(8)/13). The IIWG Chair, Sem Shikongo (Namibia), introduced agenda item 10, the report, based on the review of the IIWG of the report by the JIU, including how best to address the recommendations therein (ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.1) and the draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) (ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.2). Discussion focused on strategy adoption, relocation of the Global Mechanism (GM) to Bonn, the regional coordination units (RCUs) and the creation of a contact group.

Many delegations supported the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan. UKRAINE, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe, supported the proposals on re-organization. To operationalize the strategy, MOROCCO, CHILE, IRAN and others called for a priority mid-term programme with measurable targets and quantitative indicators, including on

programme costs and financial contributions. INDIA called for adequate, substantial, additional and predictable resources, and strengthening the RCUs. ARGENTINA said that aligning the strategy and the UNCCD would change how the UNCCD works. BRAZIL stressed the need to adopt the strategy by consensus. ZIMBABWE said a results-oriented approach requires adequate Secretariat resources. AUSTRALIA said adoption of the strategy must precede discussion about "how to get there."

THAILAND supported decentralized implementation of the strategy. LESOTHO called for speeding up resource mobilization. CHINA and SAUDI ARABIA stressed the need for an effective mechanism for its implementation. The US supported adopting the strategic plan, while recognizing that it contains elements that are not consistent with existing decisions. UGANDA, on behalf of the African Group, said the draft plan is in line with the Group's expectations, but noted it has no budget, timeline and priority actions, and recommended that the COP prepare and adopt a costed implementation plan through identifying priority actions for the first four years. TUNISIA emphasized the need for institutions for, and financing of, the strategic plan. SWITZERLAND said the plan is a useful instrument for policy dialogue nationally and internationally, urged its linkage with other plans such as those on poverty reduction and supported resource provision. HAITI emphasized collaboration with local populations. DRYNET, on behalf of the European NGOs, supported the strategy and noted that it places drylands in the development, and not simply environment, framework.

Several countries, including QATAR, MEXICO, CHINA, SAUDI ARABIA, GABON, HONDURAS and HAITI, supported strengthening the RCUs. The EU suggested viewing the RCUs within the wider context of the strategic direction. UGANDA, on behalf of the African Group, urged COP 8 to strengthen and institutionalize RCUs as a tool to support implementation of NAPs, RAPs and SRAPs. PARAGUAY, on behalf of the Latin America and the Caribbean Group, emphasized the need for a relevant regional institutional architecture. KENYA called for a firm COP 8 decision on the RCUs, as it has been pending since COP 3. SOUTH AFRICA stressed coordination between UNCCD institutions, and new terms of reference for the RCUs. Objecting to the RCUs, JAPAN said decentralization is not the way to optimize resources. The US emphasized efficiency and effectiveness of the RCUs.

BRAZIL, SWAZILAND and others called for the GM's relocation to Bonn. Other countries, including GABON and TANZANIA, emphasized the need for the Secretariat and the GM to work together. CÔTE D'IVOIRE called for a study on the proposed relocation. MAURITANIA and TUNISIA urged

that the GM be strengthened before considering relocation. GUINEA proposed assessing the value added of the GM's relocation. ETHIOPIA, stressing complementarity, said merging the GM and Secretariat is "not the best approach." LEBANON disagreed on the separation of the GM from IFAD in light of IFAD's significant resource contribution. GUINEA-BISSAU and RWANDA suggested adopting a decision to integrate the GM within the Secretariat. SYRIA said the GM had not met expectations, and suggested establishing a new financial mechanism to be placed within the Secretariat.

SWAZILAND proposed the immediate establishment of a contact group to consider the cost implications of implementing the strategy, and relocating the GM, and was supported by many delegations, including the African and Latin America and the Caribbean Groups.

Responding to delegates, IIWG Chair Shikongo explained the results-based management approach and supported early establishment of the proposed COW contact group to complete the IIWG's outstanding work. Before adjourning, COW Chair Anaedu observed there was no objection to establishing a contact group, and delegates only differed on its timing. He said a short COW session would be convened Wednesday morning, 5 September, to decide on the contact group and how it would proceed.

#### **COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

CST Chair William Dar (the Philippines) opened CST 8 and urged the Committee to focus on a science, rather than process-driven, approach and to not "shy away" from reforms.

**ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRS:** The Committee elected as Vice-Chairs Michel Sedogo (Burkina Faso), Uladzimir Sauchanka (Belarus), Richard Escadafal (France), and Maria Nery Urquiza Rodriguez (Cuba). Rodriguez will also serve as Rapporteur.

#### **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION**

**OF WORK:** The Secretariat introduced the CST agenda (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/1), including a rearrangement of topics on the Group of Experts' report. PORTUGAL, on behalf of the EU, requested that implications of the IIWG on the CST be considered. Chair Dar said this suggestion would be presented to the COP Bureau. The CST adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/1) as orally revised.

#### **IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CST: FINAL REPORT OF THE**

**GROUP OF EXPERTS:** The Secretariat introduced the Group of Experts' (GoE) final report (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2, Add.1-9). GoE Coordinator Alejandro León (Chile) discussed the GoE's work. ITALY, for the EU, noted that the GoE's mandate was broad and said, if its mandate is extended, it should develop the three priority items identified by COP 7: benchmarks and indicators, communication and information strategy, and land degradation and poverty strategy. Delegates then addressed specific GoE studies, led by the expert who facilitated each study.

Maurizio Sciortino (Italy) presented "Communication strategy: development of a mechanism for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network – THEMANET" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.2). He recommended that the CST mandate the finalization of the prototype with a suggested budget of €75,000. Many parties acknowledged the importance of the tool, while others sought clarification on, *inter alia*: links to other databases, topics covered, languages used and inclusion of traditional knowledge. NORWAY, SAUDI ARABIA and FRANCE questioned who would cover maintenance and running costs. Others emphasized that the desired impact of THEMANET must be clarified, including the target audience. The US urged parties to consider prioritizing which GoE projects to endorse, given limited funds.

Anders Hjort-af-Ornäs (Sweden) presented "Integrative assessment methodology for poverty and land degradation" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.3). The study developed an integrated methodology through which to identify linkages between large numbers of projects or information. He said the next steps include: identifying and ranking projects that could use the appraisal methodology, developing a database, carrying out rapid surveys and turning data into information sets. In response to questions about how the study countries were selected, he emphasized that the study focused on developing the methodology. SAUDI ARABIA suggested that the CST and CRIC should meet simultaneously. An NGO suggested using indicators identified by the UK's Department for International Development and additional indicators, such as a "spiritual" indicator.

Alejandro León presented "Identification of perceived gaps between biophysical, socioeconomic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification, their causes and ways of eliminating them" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.7), containing recommendations to promote demand-driven science and technology transfer. Many parties commended the GoE's work, and ITALY noted his country's creation of a traditional knowledge center. Several parties emphasized the lack of resources for acquiring and disseminating traditional and modern knowledge and for technology transfer. BRAZIL highlighted traditional knowledge ownership rights. KENYA asked about the intellectual property rights associated with technology transfer. ECUADOR asked how the report accounts for the role of politicians when determining the application of modern knowledge. NGOs stressed the need to involve communities throughout the project cycle.

Elena Abraham (Argentina) presented "Benchmarks and indicators for monitoring and assessment of desertification" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1). She explained that the report proposes the identification of a small set of basic, commonly-used indicators relevant to all countries, followed by the identification of regional indicators, and eventually country-specific approaches. Delegates called attention to the resources necessary to create and implement benchmarks and indicators and highlighted related country-level projects. BRAZIL expressed concerns with the adoption of models that are not specific to a country, stating that they could be a constraint on sovereignty. PORTUGAL, for the EU, suggested discussing indicators and benchmarks in the IIWG context. NGOs emphasized the need to involve stakeholders. ROMANIA recalled that this topic gave the CST 6 Bureau "headaches," and proposed relying on existing indicators.

Delegates received a copy of "Opportunities for Synergy Among the Environmental Conventions: Results of National and Local Level Workshops," which was produced in relation to the GoE work on "Development of synergy with other related conventions" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.4). BRAZIL introduced a related project, for which his country had developed indicators to demonstrate how the three Rio Conventions could be used to reach one objective.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

While statements in the COW settled the question about whether a contact group would be established, the timeframe for its establishment was taken up in the corridors and in informal group consultations following the early adjournment of the COW on Tuesday afternoon. Participants suggested that the dilemma relates to whether the contact group should be established before or after the CST and the CRIC have met. Those favoring late establishment reportedly argue that outstanding issues of the CST and CRIC could also be deferred to this group, while those favoring its early start are said to be concerned that important issues may otherwise be considered too late in the session.

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 met in a morning meeting of the Committee of the Whole (COW), followed by the first and second meetings of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 6). The Committee on Science and Technology (CST 8) also met throughout the day. An open-ended contact group met during the afternoon.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) opened the COW, which proceeded to establish an open-ended contact group, chaired by Vice-President Sem Shikongo (Namibia), to consider the ten-year strategic plan and Regional Coordination Units (RCUs), without re-opening agreed issues. Anaedu also announced plans to set up a contact group on the budget.

### COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Chair Franklin Moore (US) opened CRIC 6.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK:** Delegates adopted the provisional agenda (ICCD/CRIC(6)/1), except the sub-item on the comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat (ICCD/CRIC(6)/2), which the COW has taken over. It also adopted its organization of work contained in Annex II of the agenda.

### CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF CRIC 5:

Chair Moore introduced the CRIC 5 report (ICCD/CRIC(6)/11), drawing attention to its seven recommendations. INDIA sought clarification, and Chair Moore agreed, that the report is a compilation of delegations' views.

**REPORT ON ENHANCED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE CONVENTION:** The Secretariat introduced the report on enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention (ICCD/CRIC(6)/3), and Simone Quatrini of the Global Mechanism (GM) introduced options for financing targets related to combating land degradation and desertification (ICCD/CRIC(6)/3/Add.1).

The EU said monitoring and assessment should be done in the context of the ten-year strategic plan. BRAZIL objected to global targets that would burden developing countries without financial support from developed countries. NORWAY pledged continued support to the CRIC.

Noting that the GM did not benefit all countries, MALI said that sub-Saharan Africa was not mentioned in the GM's presentation. GUINEA-BISSAU said the GM's criteria for

determining support were unacceptable. NIGERIA, supported by URUGUAY, observed a misconception that the GM fundraises for countries, and added that despite its commendable work, the GM was not operating in line with its mandate. CÔTE D'IVOIRE expressed dissatisfaction with the GM and called for a revision of its approach. KENYA stressed focusing on the GM's value added. SENEGAL suggested conducting an in-depth analysis regarding the GM. GHANA, TUNISIA and MOZAMBIQUE commended the GM's contribution to their countries' efforts.

ETHIOPIA urged the Secretariat and the GM to elaborate their expected contributions to the ten-year strategic plan. THAILAND asked when the GM would support the region's action programmes. Summarizing, Chair Moore noted that many delegations addressed the need for a single work plan and this plan's significance in relation to the seven thematic areas of the Bonn Declaration.

**GLOBAL MECHANISM:** In the afternoon, the CRIC considered the item on the Global Mechanism (ICCD/CRIC(6)/4). Christian Mersmann, GM Managing Director, outlined the GM's achievements and its cooperation with governments, UN agencies and international financial institutions, especially the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Many parties agreed that the report and presentation clarified confusion related to the GM. Some thanked the GM for its support and elaborated on their interactions with it. Others, including ALGERIA, NIGERIA, the EU, GUINEA and NORWAY, noted their current overall satisfaction with the GM's work. ALGERIA and CHAD said that relocating the GM is unnecessary. HAITI said that relocation should be subject to careful analysis. NIGERIA said their dissatisfaction lies not with the GM itself but with the fact that, while the climate and biological diversity conventions were initially granted "funding mechanisms," the UNCCD only received a "broker," and thus has less funds.

SOUTH AFRICA called on the GM and the UNCCD Secretariat to work together. The EU recommended a joint work programme between the Secretariat and the GM. ARGENTINA said the UNCCD has two managers, the Secretariat and the GM, which leads to overlaps. He argued that the GM should be integrated within the Secretariat. NIGERIA agreed that integration would help align the GM and Secretariat's work, and expressed dissatisfaction that language regarding the integration "vanished" in a "non-transparent" manner at IIWG meetings following CRIC 5.

BURKINA FASO asked the GM to strengthen its work in facilitating South-South cooperation. SWAZILAND, BRAZIL and CHILE urged reinforcement in the GM's ability to build capacity, with BOTSWANA specifying that this is needed to mobilize domestic resources, supported by international funding. IRAN and PAKISTAN highlighted the importance of harmonizing all UNCCD institutions. SYRIA cautioned that support from the GM is not reaching enough countries.

Responding to interventions, Mersmann suggested that insufficient cooperation between, rather than overlapping work by, the GM and Secretariat exists, and that the ten-year strategic plan addresses this issue.

**FINANCING BY AGENCIES:** The Secretariat and the GEF introduced the document on financing of Convention implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions (ICCD/COP(6)/5 and ICCD/CRIC(6)/5/add1). Discussion will continue Thursday.

### COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Secretariat explained that agenda items pertaining to the CRIC would be addressed first, to enable the CRIC to review the CST's recommendations as soon as possible. The CST then discussed the report of the Group of Experts (GoE), the summary of Bureau activities, the UNCCD fellowship programme, the review of the GoE, and the priority theme.

Alejandro León (Chile) presented the synthesis of the analysis by the GoE of the reports submitted by parties of the fifth session of the CRIC (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/3) and "Analysis by the GoE of the reports submitted by Parties to the fifth session of the CRIC" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/INF.2). PAKISTAN urged the CST to help countries develop and understand socioeconomic indicators. KENYA stressed that indicators must be location-specific and suggested that, because many indicators already exist, usage should be emphasized. SUDAN recommended that the CRIC streamline the content and format of national reports. MADAGASCAR, BURKINA FASO and SUDAN highlighted that national development research and strategic plans often implicitly incorporate desertification mitigation. Several countries questioned how to reflect this work in national reports.

UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten suggested that CST Chair Dar coordinate with the COW and CRIC Chairs to ensure that the CST's perspective is taken into account in draft decisions on issues that the three bodies are addressing.

Kazuhiko Takeuchi (Japan) presented the study on methodologies for the assessment of desertification at global, regional and local levels (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.6). ECUADOR, MOROCCO and SPAIN discussed their monitoring system experiences. CHINA emphasized the need to link farmers to research findings at the global level, and suggested a role for the CST in linking the three levels.

Castillo Victor Sanchez (Spain) presented "Guidelines for early warning systems" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.8). Sanchez noted that no desertification early warning system is fully implemented yet, despite their potential for desertification mitigation, and described actions needed to overcome limitations. The UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction said it is willing to assist in the mobilization of resources to promote activities in the area of early warning systems to mitigate the effects of drought and land degradation.

Alejandro León (Chile) presented "Guidelines for updating the *World Atlas of Desertification*" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.9). The US said that relying on benchmarks and indicators may not be appropriate, given the debate on them under other agenda items. He also suggested creating a web-based publication, which could be updated as necessary.

CST 7 Chair Viorel Blujdea (Romania) presented the summary of activities of the Bureau during the intersessional period (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/4), including recommendations to improve the Bureau's functioning. TURKEY suggested

that the Rio Conventions develop a cooperative focus on soil conservation. KENYA noted that the anonymous nature of the CST reports is a disincentive to scientists, and supported synchronizing CST and CRIC meetings and national reporting for the Rio Conventions.

Chenchu Norbu (Bhutan), CST 7 Vice-Chair, presented the report on a UNCCD fellowship programme (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5). Several delegates highlighted their countries' own training programmes. ISRAEL said it would offer funding for ten post-graduate students to match UNCCD funding. The US inquired about the fellowship programme's funding source.

CST 7 Chair Blujdea presented "Review of the functions and the work of the GoE, and procedures for the renewal of the membership of the GoE" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/6). The EC, on behalf of the EU, proposed conducting the CST in a conference format that is open to high-level scientific input, focused on a specific thematic topic, and involves a lead institution with relevant expertise. Many speakers noted that the GoE did not have funding to conduct its work, and that a new body should have funding. BRAZIL asked if the experts would be country-appointed. WorldVision International said NGO involvement should be incorporated into the EU proposal. JAPAN supported the EU proposal and emphasized the need to strengthen the relationship between the GoE and the Thematic Programme Networks.

On the priority theme, effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation: assessment, field experience gained, and integration of mitigation and adaptation practices for livelihood improvement (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/7 and ICCD/COP(8)/CST/MISC.1), BULGARIA presented a study on climate change in her country. She detailed water, soil and wind erosion and other environmental challenges faced by Bulgaria, along with efforts to address them. This discussion will continue on Thursday morning.

### OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP

Contact Group Chair Shikongo opened the first meeting Wednesday afternoon. The Group agreed to: follow the standard procedures for the participation of observers in its work; focus on all issues relating to the implementation framework, including regional coordination, its mechanisms and plans, and the priority implementation activities; and produce one draft decision for submission to the COW, covering the adoption of the strategy, the implementation framework and recommendations for follow-up.

Despite repeated expressions of frustration by delegates about whether the starting point of the preliminary exchange of views on regional coordination units would be the exchanges from the COW or the draft strategy document, delegations commented that: regional coordination, regional units and regional programmes are different concepts; the urgency for regional institutions and their specific models varies; institutions are needed to implement the UNCCD-mandated regional programmes; RCUs designed eight years ago may be irrelevant today; and institutions operating optimally should be supported. The group will reconvene Thursday morning.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

Following the CRIC's afternoon discussion on the GM, some delegates indicated that they sensed a change in mood, with most statements indicating more satisfaction with the GM. Some suggested that the GM Managing Director's presentation, on the heels of several side events on Tuesday and Wednesday, may have helped dispel confusion regarding the Mechanism's mandate and activities. Others suggested that praise came mostly from countries currently receiving, or hoping to receive, support from the GM. Several countries believe the question of the GM's relocation will be dropped, but the GM's relationship with the Secretariat will remain on the agenda.



## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in morning and afternoon meetings of CRIC 6 and CST 8. The COW met in the afternoon. By the end of the day, four contact groups had been established. The contact group on the ten-year strategic plan met throughout the day, while contact groups on the CRIC and CST commenced in the afternoon. A contact group on the budget was created, but will commence Friday morning.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**PROGRAMME AND BUDGET:** In the afternoon, UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten introduced the report on the programme and budget (ICCD/COP(8)/2/ and Add.1-11). He noted that the proposed budget for the biennium 2008-2009 is a maintenance budget, outlined reasons for its leanness, and offered possible implications of results-based planning, programming and budgeting. CHAD suggested prioritizing activities in the event of a further decline of the dollar relative to the euro and, together with SWAZILAND, urged parties to pay arrears. COW Chair Ositadinma Anaedu said he would guide the contact group on the programme and budget until a chairperson is selected.

**REVIEW OF THE CRIC:** The Secretariat introduced the item on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention (ICCD/COP(8)/3). LESOTHO supported the existence of the CRIC. SWAZILAND and GAMBIA supported renewal of the CRIC's mandate and stressed the importance of considering outcomes from the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan. CHINA endorsed making the CRIC a permanent body and strengthening its role and function, including the review of the ten-year strategic plan's implementation. BRAZIL suggested simultaneous or back-to-back intersessional CRIC and CST meetings, objected to holding a CRIC session during COP sessions and, with CANADA, proposed that CRIC meetings be reduced to five days. CANADA suggested having two extra days for regional meetings. NORWAY said that sustainable land management is the foundation for sustainable development, rural growth and poverty reduction.

### COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

**FINANCING MULTILATERAL AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS:** CRIC Chair Franklin Moore invited statements on financing the Convention by multilateral

agencies and institutions. Many countries highlighted projects submitted to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that have not obtained funding. EL SALVADOR asked why funding for a PDF-B project approved in GEF-3 was withdrawn in GEF-4. CAMBODIA, CHILE, TANZANIA, GUINEA-BISSAU, TURKMENISTAN and PAKISTAN thanked the GEF for its support, while other countries requested GEF funding. NIGERIA complimented the GEF on its reforms. HAITI said the GEF should focus on areas where land degradation is most acute. Several Central American and African countries urged the GEF to prioritize funding for their regions.

PANAMA, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, NIGERIA, BURUNDI and MOROCCO emphasized that GEF financing for the UNCCD is insufficient and lower than for other Conventions. These countries called for equal GEF funding across conventions. SAUDI ARABIA said the GEF must be considered as the UNCCD's primary funding mechanism.

The US noted that GEF funding depends on co-financing and that the ability to obtain such co-financing influences subsequent replenishments. BURKINA FASO asked the GEF and developed countries to facilitate resource mobilization from the private sector.

PARAGUAY, on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean Group, and CHINA encouraged the GEF to improve communication with national focal points. KENYA, TANZANIA, GUINEA-BISSAU and GUATEMALA highlighted difficulties in obtaining timely support from the GEF.

Responding to questions, the GEF described its criteria for funding projects, noting that under GEF-4 a more equitable approach, taking into consideration the UNCCD's special focus on Africa, has been achieved. He added that the GEF re-examined its backlogged pipeline of projects following its fourth replenishment, resulting in the withdrawal or renewal of some projects. The GEF then introduced its current reform and new strategy.

### REPORT OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP:

Bongani Masuku (Swaziland) introduced the report of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group (AHWG) on improving the procedures for communication of information (ICCD/CRIC(6)/6 and Add.1). The EU supported the report's recommendations but called for more practical reporting procedures. CANADA said the AHWG did not meet its terms of reference.

Chair Moore announced that six draft decisions will be discussed in a contact group, chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland). He then suspended the CRIC, to allow the contact group to conclude its work.

**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**PRIORITY THEME:** Mongolia and Mexico offered papers on their countries' environmental challenges, research and lessons learned related to the CST's priority theme on the effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation. The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) presented a review of the connections between climate change and desertification, and their effects on poverty and food insecurity. TUNISIA emphasized the importance of traditional and local knowledge in identifying strategies to combat desertification. ICELAND reported on the International Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change, and highlighted the Forum's recommendation to ask the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to develop a special report on this issue.

M.V.K. Sivakumar, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), reported on a WMO- and UNCCD-organized workshop on climate and land degradation (ICCD.COP(8)/CST/8 and ICCD/COP(8)/CST/INF.1), the papers from which have been published in *Climate and Land Degradation*. ROMANIA noted that this workshop provided an example of involving high-level institutions with relevant scientific experience in the CST.

**ROSTER:** The Secretariat introduced the paper on the roster of independent experts (ICCD/COP(8)/9), highlighting the need to update the roster. No comments were offered.

**REPORT OF THE GoE:** On the GoE report on case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for users in implementing the Convention (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.5), H.P. Singh summarized several case studies, including one in which rehabilitation efforts led to a 400% return. EGYPT noted the importance of such research in demonstrating to policy makers the economic value of science. FRANCE underscored the value of comparative analyses of case studies.

**FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE CST:** Chair William Dar invited delegates to discuss the priority theme for CST 9, and noted that the draft ten-year strategic plan contains relevant recommendations. Speakers agreed with the need to align the work programme with the ten-year strategic plan and offered options for the theme. JAPAN proposed: benchmarks and indicators, monitoring and assessment and early warning systems; synergies among the Rio Conventions; and capacity development for local people. SOUTH AFRICA suggested facilitating the harmonization of national reports, early warning systems, and managing traditional knowledge. SPAIN proposed examining the socio-economic costs of not combating land degradation and desertification. ARGENTINA, supported by BRAZIL, said implementation of the ten-year strategic plan would require the RCUs and highlighted a role for them in the CST's work. FRANCE suggested that the CST could guide the Thematic Programme Networks. NORWAY noted the need to provide a full outline of the anticipated CST 9 agenda items.

The EC, on behalf of the EU, distributed a draft decision to: call for the organization of the CST in a scientific and technical conference-style format; focus on one thematic topic; and involve an institution with relevant expertise. MEXICO proposed that the CST promote the evaluation of future scenarios, as is done by the IPCC. He also suggested developing a concrete work programme, as is done by the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. PERU supported Spain, emphasized the importance of connecting the regional thematic programmes with the CST, and highlighted the issue of traditional knowledge. BURKINA FASO supported the EU proposal and suggested involving NGOs. The WMO suggested holding a scientific meeting prior to the CST to develop recommendations for

parties' consideration. H.P. Singh (GoE) suggested traditional knowledge as a theme. BRAZIL agreed on the importance of traditional knowledge and said any discussion should include benefit sharing and be in the context of negotiations in the CBD. He said the CST's and UNCCD's work must remain country-driven and should not lose sight of budgetary implications. CST Chair Dar appointed Canada and Romania as chairs of a contact group.

**OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CST**

The Contact Group on CST discussed the priority theme and EU-proposed session format. Participants developed the proposal to consider biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment to support decision-making in land management. On the EU proposal, participants discussed format and budget options. Small drafting groups were established to develop related draft decisions. The CST is expected to consider these and additional draft decisions Friday.

**OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC**

Chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland), the CRIC contact group met from 6:00-7:00 pm. Delegates decided that parties would submit written comments on the draft decisions to the chair for discussion on Friday.

**OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – STRATEGIC PLAN**

The group chaired by Vice-President Sem Shikongo (Namibia) concluded their preliminary exchange of views on the RCUs, coordination between the Secretariat and the GM, and the implementation framework. Delegates continued to diverge on what material to use as a basis for their deliberations, but agreed to submit their written regional positions on all three issues to the Chair so that he could prepare a draft text for the group's consideration on Friday afternoon.

On GM-Secretariat coordination, policy problems identified include activity overlap and confusion about whether the GM or Secretariat provides leadership to the UNCCD. Some delegations offered "practical" solutions such as medium-term and biennial work plans with milestones, building GM and Secretariat capacity, developing a joint work programme, clarifying the division of labour, and monitoring by COP. Comments on the GM highlighted its: unequal and insufficient support to parties; role evolution; mandate interpretation; and implementation of decisions from its Facilitating Committee.

On the elements for the implementation framework, many delegations used content from the draft ten-year strategic plan. While some emphasized that adopting the ten-year strategic plan requires a visible budget for activity implementation, others cautioned against conflating a strategy to implement the Convention with one to combat desertification.

**IN THE CORRIDORS**

Progress in the strategic plan contact group came close to a stand-still Thursday afternoon due to persistent disagreements over the text that should form the basis for this group's work. Delegates suggested that the attempt to re-open the section on implementation reflects some delegates' dissatisfaction with the COP 8 draft text, specifically the unexplained "disappearance" from the final IIWG report of language suggesting as a future direction "the possibility to merge the GM and the Secretariat into a single institution."

Meanwhile, there are rumors that the in-coming (Gnacadjia) and out-going (Diallo) UNCCD Executive Secretaries may arrive in Madrid over the weekend to address delegates during the High-Level Segment.

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 adopted eight draft decisions during a morning meeting of the Committee on Science and Technology, which were subsequently adopted by the COP during an afternoon plenary meeting. The contact group on programme and budget held its first meeting during the afternoon, while contact groups on the ten-year strategic plan and CRIC met during the day and into the night. The contact group on the ten-year strategic plan reconvened on Sunday afternoon.

### COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

CST 8 Chair William Dar asked delegates to consider the eight draft decisions developed by a contact group that convened Thursday evening and Friday morning. Draft decisions on the final report of the Group of Experts, programme of work of the CST, and networking of institutions, agencies and bodies were adopted without amendment.

The draft decision on the roster of independent experts was adopted with the replacement of a reference to "women" with a reference to ensuring "gender balance." On the draft decision on a UNCCD fellowship programme, SYRIA objected to referring to specific institutions, and proposed deleting the preambular reference to the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research, and the decision was adopted as amended. On the draft decision on the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project, WorldVision International proposed that LADA also take into account the needs of "stakeholders," and the decision was adopted as amended. On the functioning of the CST, the draft was revised to clarify that the reference to "holding one intersessional meeting and a shorter meeting period that will be held in conjunction with the COP" referred to the possibility of two meetings.

On the draft decision on the reshaping of the operation of the CST in line with the IIWG ten-year strategic plan recommendations, ARGENTINA and BRAZIL offered amendments to specify that the proposed conference-style format would be party-led, rather than "jointly" organized by the CST Bureau and a lead institution/consortium. An additional revision

was made to request that the Secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, consider mechanisms to secure additional funds. EU-proposed text to encourage the lead institution/consortium to assist in the mobilization of resources was also added.

CST Chair Dar said the session had involved a spirited reshaping of the CST to bring new life to the Committee and asked delegates to help it achieve "new heights."

### PLENARY

COP 8 President Cristina Narbona opened the plenary and noted that Vice-President Kenneth Roach (Trinidad and Tobago) would serve as Rapporteur. COW Chair Ositadinma Anaedu reported on the Committee's work, saying that two contact groups had been established on the implementation of the strategic plan and on programme and budget. CRIC Chair Franklin Moore said the CRIC had completed all the agenda items, except item 6 (programme of work for CRIC 7), and a contact group had begun work to consider the Committee's six draft decisions.

CST Chair Dar submitted the CST's eight draft decisions (ICCD/COP(8)/L.7-14) for plenary consideration, which the plenary adopted.

### OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

Following the plenary, delegations convened in a contact group to present statements on the programme and budget. The Secretariat offered initial remarks on the impact of the falling value of the dollar on the Secretariat's budget. Some delegations focused on the need to link the budget to the programme, including the outcome of the ten-year strategic plan and CRIC contact groups. Additional comments included: welcoming the proposed zero nominal value increase; expressing satisfaction with the proposed budget; objecting to the proposed percentage increase in the budget; questioning the UNCCD's failure to shift to Euro accounting; objecting to the Secretariat's tendency to move towards becoming an implementing agency; inquiring about the large line-item for staff training; and urging the Secretariat to move towards results-based management. Chair Anaedu said the group is expected to meet again Monday, at which time a draft text will be available.

**OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC**

Chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland), the CRIC contact group met in the morning and reconvened following plenary in the afternoon until 10:00 pm for an initial reading of its six draft decisions. One delegation requested deleting texts related to trade and market regulations throughout the decisions, because they are being discussed in other forums, and on land tenure, which they argued is a national issue. Another delegation urged that references to “affected parties in developing countries” be followed by “and other eligible parties” in the relevant sections.

Many paragraphs in draft decision 1 on strengthening the implementation of the Convention in all regions were bracketed with no amended text proposed because some regional groups were still discussing the draft text. One delegation suggested including a paragraph under “strategic orientations” inviting all parties to strengthen existing RCUs.

Some countries suggested that “developed country parties,” rather than “all parties,” should be called on to: support participatory natural resource management; build capacity for NAP implementation; and commit special funds to promote participation of NGOs, CBOs and other elements of civil society. Other countries argued that collaboration between developed and developing country parties must be reflected in the text.

Parties disagreed over whether to refer to “biofuels,” “sustainable biofuels” or “ecologically sustainable biofuels” in the context of developing new and renewable energy sources in draft decision 2 on necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention.

On draft decision 3, mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention, some countries proposed preambular text reflecting the responsibility of developed country parties, while other countries argued that resource mobilization requires partnership between developed and affected country parties.

Text calling for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change effects in developing country parties to be funded under Climate Change Funds was bracketed on draft decision 4 on collaboration with the GEF. Parties discussed how to bring the ten-year strategic plan to the attention of the GEF and whether or not the GEF could be asked to facilitate access of affected country parties to funding mechanisms related to land degradation and desertification. Several delegations noted that this is not the GEF’s responsibility, but rather the responsibility of the affected country parties. Text related to the Adaptation Fund was bracketed.

One delegation recommended replacing the word “conservation” with “sustainable use” or “sustainable management” in reference to forests, biodiversity and land and water conservation throughout draft decision 5 on activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships and synergies with other relevant conventions and relevant international organizations, institutions and agencies.

One delegation distributed an alternative text to draft decision 6, on improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP. The alternative text calls on the Secretariat

and the GM to seek external support to develop reporting guidelines prior to CRIC 7, for consideration at the CRIC. Several delegations welcomed the idea in principle.

The contact group agreed to reconvene on Monday to continue discussing the draft decisions, following regional group consultations.

**OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – STRATEGIC PLAN**

The open-ended contact group chaired by Sem Shikongo (Namibia) met on Friday and Sunday afternoons to consider its draft decision on the strategy and implementation framework, including GM-Secretariat coordination and the RCUs. It endorsed the Chair’s proposed structure of the draft decision, noting the need to eventually agree on language on the budget and placement of references to the GEF, taking into account the CRIC’s outcomes. The decision will include preambular paragraphs and operative paragraphs on the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan, CST, CRIC, GM, Secretariat, GM-Secretariat coordination, GEF, performance monitoring, and “costing of the strategy.” The Chair’s proposal requests the GM and Secretariat to include indicators of successful cooperation in their joint work programme, and pending the availability of funds, the development of mechanisms to suit coordination in the different regions, and to submit proposals to COP 9. In their preliminary comments on the structure of the draft, some delegations called for a provision on an independent external audit of the GM, but others observed it would be expensive, would be prudent to do it sometime after the implementation of the joint work programme, or should focus on the relationship between the GM and Secretariat. Most elements will be derived from the relevant sections of the ten-year strategic plan.

The group then established a “Friends of the Chair Group” (FOCG), with at least two representatives from each region, to develop a draft text. The FOCG met Friday evening and early Sunday afternoon, and developed a first draft of the decision on the draft elements, based on the Chair’s proposed structure. The open-ended contact group started negotiating this draft later Sunday afternoon, except for the provisions on the GM-Secretariat coordination and RCUs, which are linked and remain under consideration by the FOCG. Chair Shikongo also presented a draft text with proposals for the operative paragraphs of the decisions, which will be considered next.

**IN THE CORRIDORS**

Some delegates have observed that, compared to past COPs, there is relatively little happening “in the corridors” related to the COP 8 decisions. Some attribute this to the late organization of some regional groups, which has slowed movement towards negotiation. They did, however, highlight that the emergence of draft decisions on Friday demonstrates the significance of COP 8 for its subsidiary bodies.

Nonetheless, behind-the-scenes discussions were reported surrounding the question about COP endorsement of the GEF as the institutional home for the US\$6 billion dollar climate change adaptation fund. Observers suggest that there are a number of reasons why some have opposed the endorsement, including because they think the UNCCD is not the appropriate venue to take such a decision, it prejudices the institutional host, the current main beneficiaries from the GEF fear they might lose out, and successful lobbying from competitor institutions.

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in morning and afternoon meetings of the Committee of the Whole to discuss relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations, follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), outcome of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), and relations between the Secretariat and its host country. The contact group on programme and budget met in the afternoon and the contact groups on the ten-year strategic plan and CRIC convened during the afternoon and into the night to negotiate draft decisions.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS:** On the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies (ICCD/COP(8)/4 and ICCD/COP(8)/MISC.1), the UN Forum on Forests highlighted areas for collaboration with the UNCCD. ARGENTINA and NORWAY called for closer work between the scientific bodies of the Rio conventions. ARGENTINA emphasized the need for technical and political linkages, in particular between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC.

TURKEY said synergies should focus on soil management. Additional synergies were suggested with: Ramsar (SOUTH AFRICA and NORWAY); UNFF (NORWAY and SAINT LUCIA); World Heritage (SOUTH AFRICA); and UN-Water (CANADA). NORWAY, BRAZIL and AUSTRALIA said the distinct mandates of the conventions must be respected. AUSTRALIA emphasized including priorities, timelines and milestones in collaborative programmes and said the UNCCD should not start a work programme on climate change.

Delegates highlighted linkages between the goals of the UNCCD and reducing poverty (SOUTH AFRICA, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, TANZANIA and ECUADOR), sustainable forest management (KENYA) and poverty, forests and water resources (CHINA). IRAN highlighted the ongoing process on national capacity self-assessment.

Parties suggested promoting synergies at the programme, local, national and/or regional levels and between national strategies. ISRAEL said on-the-ground cooperation is required before synergies are developed. The G-77/CHINA, TANZANIA, INDONESIA and COLOMBIA stressed the need for support to promote synergies.

ARGENTINA, SAINT LUCIA, GHANA, QATAR, ECUADOR and MOROCCO highlighted projects that promote synergies within their countries, with GHANA and ECUADOR thanking the GM for its support, and GHANA thanking Canada, their *chef de file*. UNEP highlighted its projects on harmonized and on-line national reporting, knowledge management for biodiversity conventions, and Issue-Based Modules.

**OUTCOME OF WSSD:** On follow-up to the outcome from the WSSD that is relevant to the Convention, and preparation of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Committee on Sustainable Development (CSD) (ICCD/COP(8)/5 and Add.1), countries noted the opportunity to raise the profile of the UNCCD at CSD 16 and 17, which will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification. SAUDI ARABIA urged the Secretariat to make adequate preparations. KENYA and CHINA noted the opportunity to raise awareness of the UNCCD in the global arena, with CHINA emphasizing the potential to address funding problems. Among the issues recommended for CSD consideration were: the consequences of inaction and benefits of addressing land degradation (SOUTH AFRICA); where and when to relieve land from pressure (ISRAEL); an evaluation of official development assistance (BRAZIL); means of implementation (G-77/CHINA); and mining and urbanization (ZIMBABWE). BRAZIL said all options on agriculture must be compatible with WTO provisions. The EU highlighted the contribution that the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan could make to the CSD.

**IYDD:** On the outcome of the IYDD (ICCD/COP(8)/11), ALGERIA, supported by SYRIA, JORDAN, the NGO Cuban Association of the UN, SAUDI ARABIA, TUNISIA and the G-77/CHINA, proposed calling on the UN General Assembly to declare 2010-2020 as the decade of deserts and desertification. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC reported on the Fifth Latin America-Africa Forum, highlighting the benefits of South-South cooperation. Additional IYDD activities discussed included: "Villages on the Front Line," eight documentaries that aired on BBC World television during 2006 (GM); an international conference on women and desertification (CHINA); a scientific conference on the future of drylands (TUNISIA); a film on deserts and desertification in the Arab world (AMU—League of Arab States); selecting deserts and desertification as the theme for World Environment Day and producing *Global Deserts Outlook* (UNEP); and sponsoring a training workshop (EGYPT).

**HOST COUNTRY:** On the report on relations between the Secretariat and its host country (ICCD/COP(8)/12), GERMANY thanked the Secretariat for its review of relations and looked forward to meeting the new Executive Secretary to discuss the possibilities of continued cooperation.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – PROGRAMME AND BUDGET**

Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) chaired the afternoon meeting of the contact group on the programme and budget. The Secretariat introduced a draft decision, highlighting paragraphs: authorizing the Executive Secretary to notify the parties of their contributions for 2008 and 2009 in euros; deciding to introduce the euro as the accounting currency from 2010-2011; requesting the Executive Secretary to include, in addition to the proposed budget for 2010-2011, two alternative scenarios maintaining the core budget at the 2008-2009 level at 0% nominal growth and 0% real growth in euros; and adopting the indicative scale of contributions for 2008 and 2009. Participants expressed a wish for a more focused and shorter draft decision, requested the Secretariat to streamline it in line with the priorities identified in the strategic plan, inquired about the percentage of the staff cost in the budget, and expressed concern that the average expenditure per person under different items such as salary, travel and training is higher than for the other Rio convention secretariats.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC**

The contact group on the CRIC began a second reading of their draft decisions. On draft decision 1 (strengthening Convention implementation), they struggled to find a balance between affected and developed country party responsibilities. Developing countries accepted a provision inviting them to establish an enabling environment for sustainable land management, but proposed that land tenure and governance be removed from the list of ways in which this environment could be created. The change was adopted.

Discussions also focused on ways to incorporate the concept of traditional knowledge in the decisions, with one delegation requesting the inclusion of protection and sharing of benefits related to traditional knowledge. Some delegations urged the inclusion of integrated water management when referring to sustainable land management, with one party noting that water issues encourage support, but this reference was rejected.

After discussion, parties agreed to separate paragraphs related to financial resources from developed country parties and multilateral organizations, and from the GEF. They agreed to invite developed country parties and multilateral organizations to “mobilize and provide substantial financial resources from all sources” and to reserve text related to “adequate, timely and predictable financial resources” for a paragraph on the GEF. As of 8:30 pm, delegates were still discussing draft decision 1.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – STRATEGIC PLAN**

The contact group chaired by Sem Shikongo (Namibia) met in the afternoon and late into the night to discuss a draft decision on the ten-year strategic plan (SP) and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention. Shikongo circulated the first full draft decision, containing 48 paragraphs. He reported agreement on the preambular paragraphs that recognize the primary responsibility of parties in delivering the objectives of the Convention and underline the importance of the efficient implementation of the Convention in addressing desertification and land degradation. Shikongo noted that while the “Friends of the Chair Group” had agreement on the provisions on the RCUs, agreement on the Secretariat-GM coordination is pending.

Delegates reached agreement on several elements. They agreed on a decision requesting all parties to operationalize the implementation of the SP in the context of their national priorities in the spirit of international solidarity and cooperation and to report progress made towards this at COP 9. Delegates deferred discussion of the request that the Secretariat aid parties, where appropriate, to mobilize resources to support the realignment of their NAPs with the SP.

The decision requests the CST to: prepare, in collaboration with its bureau and that of the COP, a costed two-year work programme consistent with the SP and to consider it at CST 9; act on a COP 8 decision to realign its work and on reshaping the CST in line with the SP; and advise the COP on how best to measure progress on the strategic objectives of the SP. Further, it proposes that the CST present the work programme to COP 9 for consideration and adoption, and decides that the CST 9 focus theme should be biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation.

The decision determines that the CRIC is the body responsible for reviewing and monitoring implementation of the SP, requests the CRIC to prepare a multi-year programme of work that is consistent with the SP, calls for an agenda item on this subject for CRIC 7, and calls for finalizing proposals on various aspects of performance monitoring for consideration at COP 9. The CRIC is also requested to address its methodological format at CRIC 7, but discussion of a proposal deciding on a predominantly interactive format was deferred.

Discussion of the elements concerning the GM was deferred to allow some groups to consult on the proposals that: request the GM to revise its existing results-based management approach in line with the SP and to present its proposed work plan to COP; urge it to mobilize resources needed by affected country parties; and focus on the efficient and effective delivery of its core functions, including the priorities laid out in the SP.

#### **AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS**

The Ad Hoc Group of Experts (AHGE) considered procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation (ICCD/COP(8)/7) and annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures (ICCD/COP(8)/8). The Secretariat noted that the two issues have been pending since COP 2. Delegations commented that since implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and the CRIC’s future are still under discussion, consideration of the items is premature. The Secretariat was requested to prepare two draft decisions, including paragraphs: deferring the consideration of the two items to COP 9; inviting parties to submit their views to the Secretariat; and requesting the Secretariat to prepare two documents to be submitted to the next COP. The AHGE will consider the draft decisions Tuesday.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

While the “budget battle (BB)” commenced in the contact group on programme and budget, the potential for long discussions could be felt in the corridors. One delegate made it clear that his government objected to any increase of the Secretariat’s budget, while another delegation preferred a small increase if the strategic plan is adopted and a framework is formulated for its implementation. Other delegations supported deciding the programme first before talking about the budget. Several developing country parties said the Secretariat should be provided with adequate funds to implement the programme. One delegation said his regional group will meet tomorrow to discuss how to avoid a repeat of the BB experience at COP 7.

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in morning and afternoon open dialogue sessions with non-governmental organizations to discuss participation, gender and climate change. The contact group on the CRIC completed its work during a morning session. The contact group on programme and budget met throughout the day. The contact group on the ten-year strategic plan convened during the morning, with the discussion continuing in an afternoon "Friends of the Chair Group."

### PLENARY

**INCLUSION OF NGOs WITHIN THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COP:** COP 8 President Cristina Narbona opened the fourth plenary meeting of COP 8. UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten noted the value that such open dialogue sessions could have at the national level, said the Secretariat endeavors to facilitate the participation of NGOs in an effective and transparent way and relies on NGO networking systems, and highlighted that the Joint Inspection Unit recommended improving NGO participation, and welcomed ideas to do so.

Steven Mweya (Uganda) moderated the discussion on participation. Thuli Makama (Yonge Nawe, Swaziland) said participation requires access to relevant information and adequate and predictable resources, among other things. Patrice Burger (ENID – European Networking Initiative on Desertification), donning a white mask with tape over the mouth to signify "the hypocrisy of the meeting," noted that, while the Convention contains 22 references to participation, visions of what it implies vary. Evelyn Chaves (Asociación Coordinadora Indígena y Campesina de Agroforestería Comunitaria Centroamericana, Costa Rica) discussed NGO networking activities within the Latin American and Caribbean region. Makama said NGOs' demands include: participation and clearly-defined roles in the UNCCD's institutions; NGO involvement in follow-up actions on the ten-year strategic plan; and creation of a working group to consider these demands.

Discussants proposed authorizing the Secretariat to designate a youth focal point, creating an information clearinghouse, inviting parties to include at least one NGO in their delegations, and considering the modalities for NGO participation at COPs. COP 8 President Narbona noted that, of the 800 civil

society organizations (CSOs) accredited with the UNCCD, 349 representatives are at COP 8, with almost half representing Spanish CSOs. She highlighted the importance of the Aarhus Convention, and said she would promote NGO participation in her role as COP President.

Mark Biedchareton (France) moderated the panel on gender. Dilcia García (Asociación Cubana de Producción Animal, Cuba) emphasized that women take an unequal share of the burden of desertification and called on parties to create a network of women researching natural resource management to identify traditional approaches for incorporation in the work of the CST. Jacqueline Nkoyok (University of Douala, Cameroon) stressed the value of women's traditional and local knowledge, highlighted the value of micro-aid for them, and suggested that international bodies such as the GM and GEF should contribute in this regard. Yunuen Montero (Fundación IPADE, Spain) highlighted the need to open spaces to ensure that women's voices are heard.

During the discussion, one delegate called for research to determine how market access and free trade increases land degradation. Others highlighted national and regional projects supported by various donors that involve women in combating desertification.

Octavio Pérez Pardo (Argentina) moderated the discussion on climate change and reminded participants that his delegation initially proposed holding such open dialogue sessions. Sina Damba (AFAD-RIOD-Africa, Mali) said the panel would focus on the human dimensions of climate change, in particular migration. Vore Seck (CONGAD-RIOD-Africa, Senegal) elaborated on climate change-induced migration, especially among nomadic populations, and outlined its link to land degradation. Emmanuel Seck (ENDA-TM, Senegal) presented a case study of land rehabilitation in the Niayes region of Senegal, concluding that NGO research can benefit parties in policy development. Silvia Picchioni (ASPAN-RIOD-ALC, Brazil) noted the high environmental and social costs of unsustainable consumption.

During the discussion, one delegate highlighted country efforts to mobilize resources for biofuel development in developing countries. Another urged parties to recognize that agrofuels have a negative impact on rural livelihoods and do not address desertification. Participants also: asked delegates to recognize pastoralist rights and the role that pastoralism plays in sustainable natural resource management; suggested

integrating NGO research into CST work; highlighted civil society participation in government decision-making related to the UNCCD; and stressed the role of NGOs in disseminating targeted information on climate change, adaptation and mitigation. One delegate lamented the poor attendance of government delegates at the open dialogue, but said it was better than at COP 7.

COP 8 Vice-President Hlaváček urged NGOs to ensure that their governments address convention synergies in the lead up to UNFCCC negotiations in Bali in December.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – PROGRAMME AND BUDGET**

Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) chaired this contact group in the morning and co-chaired it with Jozef Buys (Belgium) in the afternoon. On the preamble, delegates agreed to merge three paragraphs on exchange rate fluctuation and adopting euro budgeting; add a new paragraph on taking note of the ten-year strategic plan; and delete many of the paragraphs in the original draft. On the operative paragraphs, delegates agreed to, *inter alia*: authorize the Executive Secretary to notify the parties of their contributions for 2008 and 2009 in euros; decide to introduce the euro as the accounting currency from 2010-2011; adopt the indicative scale of contributions for 2008 and 2009 based on the UN scale of assessment; express appreciation to the Government of Germany for its contribution to the Secretariat; and authorize the Executive Secretary to review, in the 2008-2009 biennium, the Secretariat's structure and allocation of posts in light of the ten-year strategic plan. Delegates did not agree to establish a separate fund for the costs associated with adopting the euro accounting system. A new paragraph was proposed encouraging the Secretariat to consider options for becoming carbon neutral. One delegate argued that the Secretariat's budget should be maintained at zero nominal growth in US dollar terms, but another delegation objected. Anaedu said that the group would discuss the figures during future meetings.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC**

The contact group chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland) completed its second reading of six draft decisions at 2:00 am Tuesday morning and resumed work at 10:00 am to address remaining bracketed text. All text related to RCUs was left bracketed and will be revisited pending the outcome of the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan. Delegations agreed to delete a reference to traditional knowledge in draft decision 1, on strengthening the implementation of the Convention, because it will be debated at Convention on Biological Diversity meetings later this year.

Delegations decided to eliminate decision 2 (necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention).

Some delegations urged that reference to the ten-year strategic plan be included in draft decision 4 on collaboration with the GEF. A bracketed paragraph was included to this effect.

With regard to draft decision 6 on improving procedures for communication of information and the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP, delegates agreed to request "the Secretariat and GM" to develop draft reporting guidelines before CRIC 7, but disagreed on whether to call on "the Secretariat and the GM" or "the Secretariat with support from the GM" to develop the draft report. The bracketed text will be revisited following consultation with the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan. Delegates also agreed to retain text on

seeking external support to complete the draft report. The contact group concluded its work at 12:30 pm, with Chair Masuku thanking delegations for exchanging "words not blows," and submitted the draft decisions to the CRIC Chair.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – STRATEGIC PLAN**

Having concluded, on Monday evening, the first reading of the draft decision on the Secretariat and GEF, the contact group chaired by Sem Shikongo (Namibia) drafting the decision on the ten-year strategic plan (SP) and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention completed a first reading of the remaining elements concerning civil society, performance monitoring and indicator development, and costing of the SP. These elements remain bracketed and were referred to a "Friends of the Chair Group," which met in the afternoon.

On a proposal requesting the Executive Secretary to consult with CSOs in the elaboration of selection criteria for their participation at UNCCD events, delegates discussed its feasibility and its singling out of elements in the SP.

On performance monitoring, the draft, *inter alia*, proposes a decision for COP 9 to adopt the reporting guidelines for the performance monitoring of parties and Convention bodies, and for the conduct of a mid-term evaluation. Delegates diverged on the: use of "monitoring" as a concept; reference in a consensus decision to the non-consensual Annex 2 of the SP; actors bound by the reporting guidelines and indicators, and whether the latter are developed at the local or global levels; role of the GM whether as advisor on, or developer of, the reporting guidelines; and form a proposed mid-term evaluation takes, and the body responsible for it.

On SP costing, the draft: requests the Convention bodies to prepare budget proposals and resource mobilization strategies for their work plans; encourages parties to provide resources for NAP alignment with the SP; and urges parties to prioritize SP implementation in their budgets, and various actors to provide adequate, timely and predictable financial resources for the SP. Delegates called for: a political commitment of resources for the SP; the use of "resource based-budgeting" within the resource-based management approach; broadening the invitation on resource provision to non-parties; and focusing resource mobilization on affected parties.

#### **AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS**

The *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts met briefly to consider draft decisions on procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation, and on annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures. Delegates proposed adding to the draft text a request that the Secretariat prepare options for the Terms of Reference regarding a multilateral consultative process on procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation. The group will meet again Wednesday.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Following the plenary session with NGOs, one delegate said that the open dialogue left no question about NGOs' desire to engage in the UNCCD process. Others have noted the growing number of NGOs that are included on country delegations, which makes them less visible but provides them a greater opportunity to make input to the decision drafting process. Participants also noted that the large number of side events and exhibits have provided a useful venue for the exchange of ideas. Noting that many country respondents were NGOs on their country delegations, one skeptical observer wondered whether NGOs may end up dialoguing with themselves during these sessions.



## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in a morning meeting of the Committee of the Whole and an afternoon ministerial round table, which discussed desertification and adaptation to climate change. The contact groups on programme and budget and the CRIC, and the Friends of the Chair Group on the ten-year strategic plan, met throughout the day.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**RULE 47:** COW Chair Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) opened the meeting and the Secretariat invited delegates to consider a draft text for Rule 47 (voting majority required for decisions to be adopted) (ICCD/COP(8)/6). BRAZIL, supported by SAUDI ARABIA and CANADA, said consensus is the best method for multilateral organizations and did not support decision-making procedures by voting. Chair Anaedu noted that there was no objection.

### MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE ON DESERTIFICATION AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

COP 8 President Cristina Narbona chaired a ministerial round table during the afternoon. Several speakers congratulated the UNCCD's Executive Secretary-designate, Luc Gnacadja, who was seated alongside them at the dais. Many speakers looked forward to the discussions and outcome of the December UNFCCC meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

Laurent Sedego, Minister of Environment and Quality of Life, BURKINA FASO, noted that desertification hinders development in his country, is linked to poverty, and causes increased conflict. He called for a framework for dialogue at the international and regional levels to mobilize funding to address the linked issues of desertification and climate change.

Juan Mario Dary Fuentes, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, GUATEMALA, highlighted work on energy efficiency in his country, noting its role in reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He said that expanding private and public investments and integrating risk considerations related to climate remain key challenges.

Patrizia Sentinelli, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, ITALY, suggested that an instrument on drought and access to water would enhance the international community's treatment

of these issues, and said the Italian government is willing to host a world conference on the right to water and combating desertification.

Highlighting the recent extreme climatic swings in the Caribbean, Ligia Dastro de Doens, General Administrator, National Environment Authority, PANAMA, emphasized synergies between the three Rio Conventions and elaborated Panama's ecosystem management approach to conservation.

Humberto Rosa, Secretary of State, Ministry for Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development, PORTUGAL, said all financing sources, including private, should be considered and ODA should be linked to sustainable development goals. He highlighted the EU's proposed carbon emission reductions, contingent on whether others make related commitments, and stressed the need to reshape the approach to international environmental governance.

SAMOA's Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Faumina Liuga, highlighted progress in, and funders of, Samoa's NAP, which was completed in 2006. He noted the challenges of climate change for small island States, and urged the UNCCD to focus on the issue.

Cristina Narbona, Minister of Environment, SPAIN, said there should be progress towards a new model of governance, supported developing a UN Environment Organization, and said existing instruments should be taken advantage of, such as in relation to climate change and forests.

Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, said "political will, not any amount of institutional reform," would enable the three Conventions to deliver, and flagged four areas of potential synergy between the UNFCCC and UNCCD: reforestation and land management; adaptation; education, awareness raising, information and science; and mitigation.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reported that the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice is developing guidelines on how to include climate change in all CBD work programmes and called for the development of adaptation tools.

Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, stressed the value of observation and early warning systems, capacity building in information dissemination, and integrating risk prevention in policy making in the context of the Conventions' synergies.

Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja highlighted the UN University's recent study on climate change and desertification, which called these issues among "the greatest challenges of our time." He noted the need for political will at every level and for bringing in new actors, including the private sector.

During the discussion, GUINEA highlighted the need for agricultural technologies to curb greenhouse gas emissions. MOLDOVA welcomed the calls for synergy and said he was looking for UNCCD implementation partners. EGYPT urged financing for climate change adaptation and the ten-year strategic plan, for reactivating South-South cooperation, and offered to provide training in Africa on plant genetic engineering to aid combating land degradation. CHAD expressed a desire to meet with the CBD Executive Secretary. CUBA recalled the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and said sacrifices must be made by donor countries. SAUDI ARABIA emphasized that desertification affects all countries. IRAN stressed the benefits of an ecosystem management approach in drylands initiatives. HAITI called on the international community to support the phase down of climate change impacts. To realize synergy between the Conventions, SYRIA called for an integrated implementation framework. POLAND highlighted afforestation and said it would emphasize forest management when it hosts UNFCCC COP 14 in Poznan in December 2008. TURKEY stressed soil conservation. KENYA asked about the causes for the lack of political will.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – PROGRAMME AND BUDGET**

Co-chaired by Jozef Buys (Belgium) and Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria), the contact group met throughout the day. A revised draft decision based on Tuesday's discussion was distributed. The group first discussed the Supplementary Fund. One delegation stressed the need to restructure the Secretariat and several delegations said that the Secretariat budget should be adjusted in line with the ten-year strategic plan. Another delegation said that the COP should not micro-manage the Supplementary Fund.

The group discussed a note from the CST Chair to the Chair of this group that describes the financial implications of the CST's decisions. The Secretariat offered clarifications on the budget implications associated with CST activities, including the fellowship programme, LADA project, CST Bureau meetings, and CST ordinary sessions. One delegation said that, since these financial implications will be the result of the COP decisions, delegates should accept them. Several delegations said the budget should be discussed when they have the outcomes of the other contact groups.

The group also discussed the budget for the GM (ICCD/COP(8)/2/Add.2). The GM presented the budget, explained its staffing requirements and answered delegates' questions. One delegation urged the group to not dwell too much on the details or micro-manage the budget. Co-chair Buys said the GM budget would be included in the budget of the Secretariat and discussed further. He concluded the meeting by stating that he expected feedback from the groups on the ten-year strategic plan and the CRIC on Thursday.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC**

The contact group chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland) met briefly in the morning and agreed to reconvene in the afternoon to consider two additional draft decisions submitted to it by the COW. They completed a first reading of draft decision L.16 on follow-up to the WSSD and preparation for CSD 16

and CSD 17. Parties disagreed on whether they should request the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD to influence the work programme for, or the outcomes of, CSD 16 and CSD 17, as well as the level of detail they should provide the Executive Secretary in this regard. Text on this issue remains bracketed.

The contact group began discussion of draft decision L.15 on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist in the review of the implementation of the Convention. CRIC Chair Franklin Moore (US) explained that all decisions related to the CRIC, except for the CRIC 7 programme, had been passed to the CRIC contact group from the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan to facilitate completion of work. All parties agreed on the desire to renew the CRIC's mandate, however they could not agree on whether or not to make it a permanent subsidiary body of the COP. Several parties suggested renewing the CRIC's mandate until COP 9, in order to provide time to establish Terms of Reference for its establishment as a permanent body thereafter. One delegation emphasized that many developing countries view the CRIC as the "heart" of the Convention and urged parties to "make a statement" in this regard. The delegation suggested making the CRIC a permanent body, provisional on the adoption of its Terms of Reference at COP 9. Parties agreed not to draft Terms of Reference at COP 8 but reached no further consensus. The group will reconvene on Thursday.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS I**

The "Friends of the Chair Group" on the ten-year strategic plan was locked in closed-door negotiations all afternoon Tuesday and all day Wednesday. During this period, the group reportedly focused predominantly on seven decision elements concerning Secretariat-GM coordination. Some report that delegates were near consensus, with the only outstanding issue being the proposal to continue supporting the "existing RCUs." Reports suggest that the other two issues that were of interest are a proposal requesting the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the GM, to review the regional proposals and means for operationalizing them, and a proposal to conduct an external independent evaluation of the GM. Several delegates expressed optimism by Wednesday evening that there would be rapid movement Thursday to reach agreement on the proposals that the open-ended group "parked" when they handed over the draft to the Chair's "Friends."

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS II**

While the budget discussion has reportedly gotten off to a slow but cordial start, some have expressed concern about whether the constructive atmosphere will continue as the interlinkages between contact groups are addressed. Some delegations feel that the budget negotiations should commence when they have the outcomes of the other contact groups, especially those of the group on the strategic plan. However, one delegate pointed out that waiting to do so could end in late night talks on Friday. Many expressed their hope that efforts to coordinate with other groups to get information of the possible financial implications of those groups' outcomes would be carefully managed.

Meanwhile, delegates seemed positive about the "low-key" introduction of UNCCD Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja to the COP, noting that "he played his politics right" since the round table was not "his" forum, but a forum for the ministers. Gnacadja reportedly arrived in Madrid over the weekend to "scope the landscape" and is working through a long list of groups and individuals to consult.

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2007

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 Kalbermatten, 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 MAGHREB UNION. Several speakers, including SUDAN and PALESTINE, highlighted the links between natural resources and conflict. GUATEMALA described regional efforts it is leading. NAMIBIA described national efforts aimed at adaptation to climate change, with a focus on changes in farming systems. SOUTH AFRICA outlined its activities, including implementation of a Biodiversity Monitoring Network and alien plant management and veld fire management strategies.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA called for COP guidance in elaborating synergies among the Rio Conventions. ROMANIA said the UNFCCC and CBD could benefit from synergies with UNCCD, and not simply vice versa. The GAMBIA said failure

to accept the links between the Rio Conventions will show a lack of seriousness and commitment to the UNCCD. BOLIVIA emphasized the links between water and land. ALBANIA reported that it has elaborated a strategic document on synergies among the three Rio Conventions.

BARBADOS stressed the climate change-desertification nexus and, to this end, called for a formal interagency link and establishment of a programme of cooperation, and work with countries to understand their key vulnerabilities. Noting that COP 8 is a turning point for the UNCCD, HAITI reiterated the importance of the synergies of the three Rio Conventions, and Portugal, for the EU, stressed adding water scarcity and management to these inter-linkages.

In addition to stating that convention synergy should "go beyond words," BURKINA FASO said the UNCCD is a tool for achieving the MDGs, but is hindered by resource constraints. Emphasizing the UNCCD's potential as an instrument to address poverty, GERMANY said the Convention is about people, not institutions. SOLOMON ISLANDS called for people-centred solutions to land degradation. VENEZUELA, highlighting its resource contribution to UNCCD implementation, stressed ODA that does not increase dependency and poverty. IRAN said synergy must begin at the national level.

The UNFCCC described its recent study on investment and financial flows, which indicates that present funding for adaptation is insufficient for meeting future adaptation needs, and said the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of the Rio Conventions has identified adaptation and addressing deforestation as priority areas of work. The CBD highlighted that the JLG meeting on Wednesday had adopted four concrete measures to enhance synergies between the Conventions. The WMO elaborated on the establishment, in cooperation with the UNCCD, of the Drought Management Centre for South-Eastern Europe.

Pakistan, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, recalled that Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation identify the UNFCCC as the key instrument for addressing climate change, and called for strengthening funding mechanisms for adaptation activities, including through the GEF and other related funds. ARMENIA highlighted the roles of funding sources, such as the Adaptation Fund and the CDM, in addressing desertification and climate change. GABON said its forests absorb carbon equivalent to the amount emitted by the five biggest European powers, and polluting countries should pay for the problem.

Presenting the African Common Position, GHANA urged parties to pay their obligations, support and institutionalize RCUs, and strengthen GM-Secretariat coordination.

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 be upscaled by parties. ICELAND supported the establishment of an independent panel of experts for the UNCCD, and reported the outcomes of the recently concluded forum on soils held in his country. ISRAEL described the newly established Global Network on Dryland Research Institutes (GNDRI) 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 equitability 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.

## **OPTEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – PROGRAMME AND BUDGET**

Co-chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) and Jozef Buys (Belgium), the contact group met throughout the day. Various options on the budget were tabled by delegations, including: adoption of the budget proposal of the Secretariat; 10% increase in euros; 5% increase in US dollars; and zero nominal growth in US dollars. Anaedu explained that a 5% increase in US dollar terms would mean a 10% decrease in euro terms.

Following one delegation's suggestion, the group identified the key messages that should be conveyed in the decision on programme and budget, including: aligning the budget with the strategic plan; seeking efficiency in the use of resources and the operations of the Secretariat and GM; seeking judicious use of Supplementary Fund resources; taking into account all COP decisions; and clarity of financial reporting based on results-based management.

The group then proceeded to the second reading of Draft Decision 23/COP 8 (programme and budget). Delegations reached agreement, *inter alia*, on paragraphs: welcoming the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan; taking note of the Secretary-General's appointment of the Executive Secretary at the Assistant Secretary-General level; and noting that the operations of the Secretariat and GM must be managed on the basis of the amount of the approved biennium core budget. Delegations will resume negotiations on bracketed text on Friday.

## **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC**

The contact group chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland) met in the afternoon. Delegates were informed that, for legal reasons, it is not possible to harmonize reporting under the three Rio Conventions, so they altered language in CRIC draft decision 6 on this subject, to request the Secretariat, with the other secretariats of the JLG, to advise on ways to make reporting more efficient.

On COW draft decision L.15, parties agreed to renew the mandate of the CRIC as a subsidiary body of the COP. They agreed that it should function under its present terms of reference "where applicable" and that these terms should be "revised as necessary" at COP 9, bearing in mind the ten-year strategic plan, relevant COP 8 decisions, and outcomes from CRIC 7 and 8.

## **IN THE CORRIDORS**

The "Friends of the Chair Group" on the ten-year strategic plan met all day and was expected to work late into the night Thursday, following a 2:00 am "breakthrough" Thursday. It was reported that parties may have agreed to: have the JIU conduct an assessment of the GM along with the Terms of Reference for the assessment; and continue supporting the RCUs, pending the elaboration of regional proposals on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination and a Secretariat-led review of current initiatives for consideration at COP 9. Overall progress was reported to be slow, and by Thursday evening delegates had only addressed the provisions on the Secretariat, GM, and performance monitoring. Some suggested that a "catch-22" situation may be unfolding, as the budget group awaits progress on the strategic plan and vice versa.

**ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:** The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COP 8 will be available on Monday, 17 September 2007, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/desert/cop8/>

**SUMMARY OF THE EIGHTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 3-14 SEPTEMBER 2007**

The eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) convened in Madrid, Spain, from 3-14 September 2007. In addition to the work of the COP, UNCCD parties also attended the sixth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 6) from 4-14 September, and the eighth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 8) from 4-7 September. Additional events included a special segment on 12-13 September, which featured a dialogue among high-level officials on the theme “Desertification and adaptation to climate change.”

During its opening meeting, many delegations highlighted that COP 8 would be a pivotal meeting in the Convention’s history. They looked to both its development of a ten-year strategic plan and its focus on elements related to its institutional structure, such as the relationship between the Secretariat and Global Mechanism, and the formats of the CRIC and CST, to provide new guidance and opportunities for the Convention to achieve its objectives. Negotiations on most elements proceeded slowly but constructively, with delegates indicating overall satisfaction with the outcomes. The decision on programme and budget, however, was not adopted, leaving parties uncertain about how the reforms adopted in Madrid will be implemented

The COP approved twenty-nine decisions before the final gavel at 7:43 am on Saturday, 15 September. These included five decisions related to the CRIC’s agenda and eight decisions related to the CST’s agenda. The decision on the ten-year strategic plan attracted the most attention from COP 8 delegates, because they saw it as an opportunity to refocus the Convention’s institutions with the goal of furthering implementation. The CRIC decision to ask the Secretariat, in consultation with the Global Mechanism, to revise the format of national reports and the CST decision to convene future sessions in a conference-style format contributed additional efforts to reform the UNCCD’s implementation mechanisms in the coming decade.

Negotiations on the programme and budget continued into the early hours of Saturday, 15 September, and Japan ultimately indicated that it could not accept the 5% increase in the euro value of the Secretariat’s core budget that was incorporated into the draft decision on this agenda item. He called for an Extraordinary COP to take place in New York during the UN General Assembly to finalize this element of the programme and budget decision. As a result, delegates left Madrid’s Palacio de Congresos early Saturday morning feeling disappointed that they were not able to deliver all of the elements within the COP’s purview that were necessary to enable the Convention to progress.

**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

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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 action for Africa and interim measures in other regions and to prepare for COP 1.

**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. 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 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. Based on recommendations from the CST, 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 achievements included 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 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, including the establishment of the CRIC, identification of modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and support for a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

**CRIC 1:** CRIC 1 convened at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002. Delegates considered presentations from the five UNCCD regions and addressed seven thematic issues. 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:** COP 6 met from 25 August - 6 September 2003, in Havana, Cuba. The CST and CRIC met concurrently from 26-29 August. Delegates designated the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD and identified criteria for the COP 7 review of the CRIC, in addition to other decisions, including on: activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies; and follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The CST discussed improving its efficiency and effectiveness, among other agenda items.

**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 recommendations for the future work of the Convention.

**COP 7:** COP 7 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17-28 October 2005. The CST met from 18-21 October and the CRIC met from 18-27 October. Participants reviewed the implementation of the Convention, developed an MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF, adopted the programme and budget for the 2006-2007 biennium, and reviewed the recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the UN, among other agenda items. A proposal to add an agenda item on the procedure for the selection of an Executive Secretary was not accepted and discussion on the regional coordination units ended without the adoption of a decision. The CST considered land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation, among other issues.

**IIWG:** Following a COP 7 decision, an Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) convened four times from May 2006 - May 2007 with the mandate to review the JIU report and to develop a draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention. The report of the IIWG's review of the JIU's recommendations and the draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention were forwarded to COP 8 for its consideration.

**CRIC 5:** The fifth session of the CRIC convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 12-21 March 2007, to review implementation of the Convention in affected country parties in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe. Much of the meeting was devoted to panel presentations and discussions on selected topics, such as the promotion of technology transfer and know-how, sustainable land management, early warning systems, financial resource mobilization, synergies with other conventions, rehabilitation of degraded lands, and the promotion of new and renewable energy sources. The meeting also addressed how to improve information communication and national reporting, reviewed the International Year on Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), and conducted a Global Interactive Dialogue with stakeholders on investments in rural areas in the context of combating land degradation and desertification.

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY APPOINTMENT:** Hama Arba Diallo resigned from his position as Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, effective 19 June 2007, following his election as a member of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso. On 3 September, the Bureau endorsed the UN Secretary-General's proposal of Luc Gnacadja (Benin) as the new Executive Secretary. He will assume his official duties on 1 October 2007.

## COP 8 REPORT

Participants at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification convened on Monday morning, 3 September 2007, in a welcoming ceremony that was held under the aegis of the Crown Prince and Princess of Spain. In his opening remarks, Grégoire de Kalbermatten, the Convention Secretariat's Officer-in-Charge, welcomed the Prince and Princess of Asturias, paid tribute to former UNCCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo, and highlighted that COP 8 offered a defining moment in the UNCCD's evolution, given recent climatic events and progress in developing the UNCCD ten-year strategic plan. David Mwiraria (Kenya), President of COP 7, paid tribute to Diallo and highlighted the ten-year strategic plan and the programme and budget for 2008-2009 as two of the most important items to be addressed at COP 8.

Alberto Ruiz Gallardón, Mayor of Madrid, welcomed participants and described the city's experience in combating desertification. Cristina Narbona, Minister for the Environment of Spain, noted that her country has doubled its official development assistance and increased its support to Africa, and committed to further support affected countries in their efforts to combat desertification. Felipe de Borbón, Prince of Asturias, welcomed participants to Spain and detailed Spain's longstanding efforts to combat land degradation.

Following an opening reception with Spain's Crown Prince and Princess, delegates reconvened in an opening plenary to elect Minister Narbona as COP 8 President as well as additional officers, adopt the agenda and offer statements. During the two-week session, delegates convened in meetings of the plenary, Committee of the Whole (COW), Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and Committee on Science and Technology (CST). Four contact groups were established to negotiate decisions related to the ten-year strategic

plan, CRIC, CST and programme and budget. A special segment engaged high-level officials in a roundtable discussion on desertification and adaptation to climate change and an exchange of statements. This report summarizes the discussions in the plenary, special segment, COW, CRIC, CST and contact groups, as they relate to the decisions adopted by COP 8.

## PLENARY

COP 7 President Mwiraria declared open COP 8 during an opening plenary on Monday afternoon, 3 September. Delegates elected Minister Narbona as COP 8 President by acclamation, following which Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten presented an overview of the Secretariat's work since COP 7. He acknowledged CRIC Chair Franklin Moore's (US) role in making CRIC 5 a success and said the Secretariat looks forward to enhanced cooperation with the Global Mechanism (GM).

The plenary then adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(8)/1 and Corr.1), with two oral revisions: a new sub-item was added to consider a decade of deserts and combating desertification (2010-2020) under item 14 (IYDD); and agenda item 10 was renamed (regional coordination units, RCUs). Following delegates' decision to establish a Committee of the Whole (COW), President Narbona noted that the Bureau had changed the COW's programme of work to allow more time for discussion of agenda item 9 (follow-up of the JIU and strategy development).

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE PRESIDENT:** During the opening plenary on 3 September, President Narbona invited delegates to elect nine vice-presidents and a Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). The COP elected Sem Shikongo (Namibia), Siddarth Behura (India), Khaled al-Sharaa (Syria), Jiří Hlaváček (Czech Republic), Yurie Kolmaz (Ukraine) and Mary Rowen (US) as Vice-Presidents. Delegates also elected William Dar (the Philippines) as CST Chair and noted that Franklin Moore (US) had been elected to chair CRIC 5 and 6. On 4 September, delegates elected the remaining Vice-Presidents for the COP, namely: Hamdi Aloui (Tunisia), Kenneth Roach (Trinidad and Tobago) and Ariel Rusiñol (Uruguay). Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) was designated as Chair of the COW. On 7 September, Kenneth Roach was designated as Rapporteur.

**ACCREDITATION OF ORGANIZATIONS AND ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS:** Delegates adopted the document on Accreditation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, admission of observers (ICCD/COP(8)/14 and Add.1) without comment.

**STATEMENTS BY PARTIES, UN AGENCIES AND OBSERVERS:** In their opening remarks, delegations paid tribute to the work of former Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo. Many also emphasized their desire to work together cordially and constructively during COP 8, and highlighted their positions on COP 8 agenda items.

Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), welcomed the work done by the IIWG, supported the GM as a useful tool, expressed the belief that the improved Secretariat will enhance UNCCD implementation, and called for parties to adopt the programme and budget of the Secretariat for 2008-2009. Portugal, on behalf of the European Union, Turkey and Croatia, said political support for the UNCCD requires a

more streamlined and strategic approach, which can be achieved only if the ten-year strategic plan is adopted. Belarus, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe, stated his region's support for the ten-year strategic plan and highlighted the need for significant financial resources. Uganda, on behalf of the African Group, said COP 8 should substantially increase resources to the Secretariat and welcomed the outcomes of the IIWG and the *Ad Hoc* Working Group (AHWG) on national reporting. Paraguay, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, complimented the IIWG's work, stressed the need to finance the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan, and highlighted the need for a sufficient budget for the Secretariat. Myanmar, on behalf of Asia and the Pacific, called for broader collaboration between the Secretariat and the GM and expressed his region's interest in following the issue of results-based management. Canada implored parties to achieve results and progress at COP 8 and said support for the ten-year strategic plan and commitment to its adoption will be a critical measure of COP 8's success and a determining factor in his country's assessment of the value of future participation.

The UN Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction also addressed the COP, outlining their UNCCD-related activities. Fundación IPADE, Spain, on behalf of the NGO community, appealed to donors to contribute new and additional financial resources and said the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan is the "last chance." IUCN – The World Conservation Union expressed hope that COP 8 would give "better attention" to civil society involvement. For more detailed coverage of the opening statements, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04197e.html>.

**OPEN DIALOGUE SESSION:** This NGO-organized session was held on Tuesday, 11 September, and consisted of discussions around three themes: participation, gender and climate change. UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten noted: the value that such open dialogue sessions could have at the national level; the Secretariat's endeavors to facilitate the participation of NGOs in an efficient and transparent manner; the Secretariat's reliance on NGO networking systems; and the JIU recommendation to improve NGO participation.

Steven Mweya (Uganda) moderated the discussion on participation. The four speakers on this topic highlighted, *inter alia*, that: participation requires access to relevant information and adequate and predictable resources; visions of what participation means vary; NGOs should be involved in follow-up actions to the ten-year strategic plan; and a working group should be established to consider NGO demands. Discussants suggested that the Secretariat: designate a youth focal point; invite parties to include at least one NGO on their delegations; and consider modalities for NGO participation at COPs. COP 8 President Narbona said she would promote NGO participation throughout her presidency.

Mark Biedchareton (France) moderated the discussion on gender. Three speakers presented and made suggestions, including that parties should create a network of women researchers to incorporate traditional approaches to natural

resource management into the CST's work. During the discussion, many participants described national and regional projects that involve women in combating desertification.

Octavio Pérez Pardo (Argentina) moderated the discussion on climate change. Four speakers emphasized climate change-induced migration and its linkages to land degradation, with one speaker presenting a case study of land rehabilitation in Senegal that demonstrated the benefits of NGO work for policy development. Participants: debated the merits of biofuels and agrofuels; discussed pastoralist rights; suggested integrating NGO research into CST work; and stressed the role of NGOs in disseminating targeted information on climate change, adaptation and mitigation. One delegate lamented the poor attendance of government delegates at the open dialogue, although he noted it was better than at COP 7.

**Final Decision:** In the final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.32/Rev.1), the COP takes note, with appreciation, of the Declaration of NGOs attending COP 8, and decides to include it as an annex to the COP 8 report.

**SPECIAL SEGMENT:** A Special Segment took place on Wednesday and Thursday, 12-13 September. A roundtable discussion on Wednesday afternoon brought 11 ministers, deputy ministers and heads of UN agencies together to discuss desertification and climate change. On Thursday, 85 speakers, including 17 ministers and 9 vice-ministers, addressed the Special Segment.

**Round Table:** COP 8 President Cristina Narbona chaired the ministerial round table. Several speakers congratulated the UNCCD's Executive Secretary-designate, Luc Gnacadja, who was seated alongside them at the dais. The ministers looked forward to the discussions and outcome of the December United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Bali, Indonesia. Round table participants proposed a number of issues to consider in relation to the relationship between desertification and climate change, including: developing a framework for dialogue at the international and regional levels to mobilize funding to address the linked issues of desertification and climate change; expanding private and public investments and integrating risk considerations related to climate; developing an instrument on drought and access to water; further exploring synergies between the three Rio conventions; focusing on the challenges of climate change for small island states; and taking advantage of existing instruments, such as in relation to climate change and forests.

Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, said "political will, not any amount of institutional reform," would enable the three Rio conventions to deliver. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), highlighted the CBD's work to develop guidelines on how to include climate change in all its work programmes. Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the WMO, stressed integrating risk prevention in policy making in the context of the conventions' synergies. UNCCD Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja noted the need for political will at every level and for bringing in new actors, including the private sector.

During the discussion, delegations highlighted the need for: agricultural technologies to curb greenhouse gas emissions; synergies among the Rio conventions; financing for climate



change adaptation and the ten-year strategic plan; and reactivating South-South cooperation. They also called for the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, ecosystem management approaches in drylands initiatives, an integrated implementation framework, afforestation and soil conservation. For more detailed coverage of the round table, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04204e.html>

**General Statements:** On Thursday, COP 8 President Cristina Narbona invited ministers and senior officials to make general statements. UNCCD Secretariat Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten 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 achieve the Millennium Development Goals 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 he said 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 and 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.

In their statements, speakers introduced their UNCCD-related national activities and stressed the need for COP guidance in elaborating synergies among the Rio conventions, links between water and land issues, and people-centered solutions to land degradation. The UNFCCC and CBD highlighted decisions of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), including the agreement to adopt as priority areas of work adaptation and addressing deforestation. Speakers also discussed resource needs, calling for strengthening funding mechanisms for adaptation activities, including through the GEF and other related funds. Funding sources such as the Adaptation Fund and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) were highlighted in connection with efforts to address desertification and climate change. The importance of the GEF as the UNCCD's main financing mechanism was emphasized, and developed country parties were called on to adopt equitable trade incentives that would enable developing countries to increase their participation in global trade.

On specific issues under discussion at COP 8, speakers suggested that the ten-year strategic plan: needs concrete, and preferably quantitative, goals; should emphasize enhanced capacity at the local level to adapt to climate change and increase support to developing countries to combat desertification; will enable the adoption of better regional and global integrated strategies; should reflect the needs of countries in southern and eastern Europe; should be accompanied by an implementation framework; and needs a substantial budget to be effective.

On the GM, speakers said it should: cooperate more closely with the Secretariat, and continue work under its new reforms; be strengthened in its structure; and engage in increased capacity building. One speaker said it should not be made an alternative secretariat or engage in functions that compete with the Secretariat. The GM's host institution, the International

Fund for Agricultural Development (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; its cooperation with IFAD is growing stronger; and the COP has given strong guidance to the GM and Secretariat on how to move forward. One speaker highlighted its commitment to the Rio Principles and Paris Declaration, and stressed the prioritization of sustainable land management to qualify for UNCCD financing.

Speakers emphasized the role the CST should play in serving as a center of knowledge and expertise on desertification. Several speakers supported the proposal for a 2010-2020 decade for combating desertification, and others welcomed the contributions and deliberations emanating from this conference on the preparations for the upcoming meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development where desertification and land management issues will be addressed. For more detailed coverage of these statements, see <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04205e.html>

Based on the statements during the Special Segment, a Madrid Declaration was developed and COP 8 President Narbona introduced it during the closing plenary. The Declaration notes: "The strategic orientation of the Convention, which has now been consolidated in Madrid, reaffirms our common political commitment to the process of UNCCD implementation and promises to provide a more specific response to this question. We can fulfill our commitments and we must do so. All that is needed is stronger political will." It also lays down seven areas to which attention should be directed, namely:

- establishment of specific targets as part of the UNCCD process through the adoption and pursuit of a ten-year strategic plan;
- a target set for activities related to carbon sinks and increased land productivity to be met in all drylands;
- consideration of the social and economic costs of desertification;
- strengthened linkages through increased cooperation between the three Rio conventions;
- promotion of scientific and technological cooperation over vulnerability, degradation and carbon sinks;
- closer relations between institutions and programmes to facilitate access by UNCCD parties to the human and financial resources they need to stimulate national efforts; and
- promotion of effective participation by NGOs and other civil society stakeholders in the UNCCD process.

A draft decision to take note of the Madrid Declaration was considered by the COW on Saturday morning, 15 September, and its title was orally amended. The plenary subsequently adopted the decision as amended.

**Final Decision:** In the decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.31), the COP takes note of the Declaration attached to the decision, and decides to annex the Declaration to the COP 8 report.

#### **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

The COW was chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) and met throughout the two weeks. A contact group on the ten-year strategic plan and the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) was established under the chairmanship of COP 8 Vice-President Sem Shikongo (Namibia). It met throughout the two-week session,

at times in a smaller “Friends of the Chair” group. A contact group on the programme and budget was established Friday, 7 September, and met throughout the second week, co-chaired by Anaedu and Jozef Buys (Belgium). This summary of the COW is organized according to the decisions it adopted. Unless otherwise noted, all decisions were adopted during the closing plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

#### TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN AND FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION:

On Tuesday, 4 September, the Secretariat introduced the relevant agenda items’ reports on the follow-up to the JIU report and strategy (ICCD/COP(8)/10) and INF.5), and on the RCUs (ICCD/COP(8)/13). Sem Shikongo, who chaired the IIWG, also introduced two documents: the report, based on the review by the IIWG that includes recommendations of how best to address the JIU recommendations (ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.1), and the follow-up to the JIU (ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.2) report with an addendum, the draft ten year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018).

Following initial comments by delegations, in which a majority expressed support for the draft ten-year strategic plan, an open-ended contact group chaired by Shikongo was established to consider the ten-year strategic plan and the RCUs, but was instructed not to re-open for negotiation agreed-upon issues in the ten-year strategic plan. The contact group agreed to: follow the standard procedures for the participation of observers, focus on all issues relating to the implementation framework, and produce one draft decision focused on the adoption of the strategy, implementation framework, and recommendations for follow-up for submission to the COW.

The contact group met from Wednesday to Friday, 5-7 September, and again on Sunday afternoon, 9 September. Three sessions were dedicated to a preliminary exchange of views. Delegates generally agreed on many of the provisions concerning the parties, CST, CRIC, Secretariat, GM, GEF, and civil society, but diverged on the elements pertaining to the preambular paragraphs, Secretariat-GM coordination, RCUs, performance monitoring and indicator development, and the cost implications of the strategic plan and what the first steps should be to follow it up. They also differed on whether to use the strategic plan as a basis for their deliberations or the input from their exchanges.

In their preliminary remarks on the draft, delegates disagreed on the need for an independent external audit of the GM with some citing cost, others suggesting doing so after the joint work plan has been implemented, while some argued that the evaluation should focus on the relationship between the Secretariat and the GM, and not the GM specifically. With regard to the RCUs, discussion focused on the: conceptual differences between regional coordination, units, and programmes; urgency for regional institutions and their specific models; institutions needed to implement UNCCD-mandated regional programmes; relevance of RCUs designed eight years ago; and optimal operations.

With regard to performance monitoring, delegates diverged on: the use of “monitoring” as a concept; references to Annex II of the strategic plan because it was not a consensus text; the development at the global level of, and commitment of

actors to, reporting guidelines and indicators; and the form the mid-term evaluation would take. On costing and budgeting, delegates proposed: the use of a resource-based budgeting approach in the elaboration of the budgetary requirements; to include actors in addition to parties in the provision of resources; and emphasis on resource mobilization among affected countries because commitment would lead to interest from other parties.

The first full draft of the decision was circulated on Monday, 10 September. The “Friends of the Chair Group” was tasked with negotiating the draft. The Group met in closed-door sessions during the second week. On Friday morning, 14 September, the group met in a joint session with the contact group on programme and budget to discuss the integration of the ten-year strategic plan into the programme and budget.

On Friday evening, the contact group reconvened, reached agreement on its draft decision, and transmitted it to the COW, which adopted it on Saturday morning, 15 September, following two amendments. Brazil noted that paragraph 30 (requiring evidence-based options for improving regional coordination arrangements), not 33 (on the decision to continue support for the RCUs), was the agreed paragraph number that should be cited in paragraph 32(b) (options for improving the RCUs). Chair Anaedu pointed out an omission in paragraph 27 requiring that the report of the JIU’s review of the GM be “submitted to COP 9 for consideration.” The closing plenary adopted the decision without comment as orally amended by the COW.

**Final Decision:** In its preambular provisions (ICCD/COP(8)/L.17), the COP decision: emphasizes that the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan requires efforts from all parties, recognizes the responsibilities of all parties and the need for adequate resources for the Convention and its institutions, underlines the importance of the efficient implementation of the Convention, and decides to adopt the ten-year strategic plan and the specific guidelines enacted on the implementation Framework. The decision also, *inter alia*, requests parties to operationalize the strategy according to their national priorities and based on the reporting guidelines, and report the progress made in implementing the strategic plan at COP 9. The CST is requested to prepare a costed two-year work programme, include this item on its CST 9 agenda and present it to COP 9, and provide advice to the CRIC on how best to measure progress on the strategic objectives.

The decision also: decides that the CRIC is responsible for review of the implementation of the strategic plan and that CRIC 7 be a special session to consider methodological matters to advance the strategy’s implementation; and requests it, in consultation with others, to prepare its own draft multi-year work programme and to finalize proposals for the performance review and assessment of the UNCCD implementation emanating from CST 9 for discussion at COP 9. It also decides that CST 9 shall be held in conjunction with CRIC 7.

The GM is requested to revise its current work plan to make it consistent with the strategic plan, present its draft multi-year work plan and biennial programme of work to CRIC 7 for review and then consideration at COP 9, and is urged to promote actions leading to the mobilization of international and national resources needed by affected country parties. The UNCCD Executive Secretariat is requested to: prepare a draft

multi-year work plan with a supplementary costed biennial work programme in keeping with the strategic plan and to present them to CRIC 7 for review and COP 9 for consideration, and to report on progress in the implementation of the Strategy to COP 9.

On GM-Secretariat coordination, the COP: directs the executives to implement the strategic plan within their respective mandates, and requests them to submit a draft joint work programme that includes indicators of successful cooperation based on resource-based management for review at CRIC 7 and consideration by COP 9, as well as by the JIU during its evaluation of the GM. The terms of reference and time-frame for the evaluation are also elaborated. Further, the decision calls on each region to develop a proposal, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary and GM, on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention. The decision further requests the Executive Secretary to compile regional proposals and the means for operationalizing them for consideration at COP 9, taking into account the GM's views.

On performance monitoring, the decision invites parties to develop nationally and regionally relevant indicators, requests the Executive Secretary to consolidate them and to ensure the integration of recommendations from CST 9 based on discussions at CRIC 8 relevant to establishing reporting guidelines in line with the strategic plan. The decision also affirms the COP as the main body to assess and review overall implementation of the strategic plan, and decides that COP 10 will develop appropriate modalities, criteria and terms of reference for an independent mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan.

On costing of the plan, the decision encourages parties to consider prioritizing the need for supporting the implementation of the strategic plan, recognizes the need for parties to realign their National Action Programmes (NAPs) with the strategic plan, invites parties to mobilize resources for this exercise, and invites developed country parties, multilateral organizations, the private sector and relevant organizations to make resources available to affected developing countries for the implementation of the strategic plan.

**PROGRAMME AND BUDGET:** The programme and budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (ICCD/COP(8)/2/ and Add.1-11) was addressed in the COW on Thursday, 6 September, and in an open-ended contact group beginning on Friday, 7 September, and continuing through the second week.

In the COW on Thursday, 6 September, UNCCD Secretariat Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten reported on the programme and budget, noting that the proposed budget for the biennium 2008-2009 is a maintenance budget and offering possible implications of results-based planning, programming and budgeting. Following plenary, delegations convened in an open-ended contact group. The Secretariat made initial remarks on the impact of the falling value of the US dollar on the Secretariat's budget. Some delegations focused on the need to link the budget to the programme, including the outcomes of the contact groups on the ten-year strategic plan and CRIC. Additional comments included: expressing satisfaction with the proposed budget; objecting to the proposed percentage increase in the budget; questioning the UNCCD's failure to shift to euro accounting;

objecting to the Secretariat's tendency to move towards becoming an implementing agency; inquiring about the large line-item for staff training; and urging the Secretariat to move towards results-based management.

The contact group then proceeded to discuss a draft decision. Participants inquired about the percentage of the staff cost in the budget, and expressed concern that the average expenditure per person is higher than for the other Rio convention secretariats. The group discussed a note from the CST Chair to the Chair of this contact group, which describes the financial implications of the CST's decisions. The group also discussed the budget for the GM (ICCD/COP(8)/2/Add.2). Following one delegation's suggestion, the group identified the key messages that should be conveyed in the decision on programme and budget, including: aligning the budget with the ten-year strategic plan; seeking judicious use of Supplementary Fund resources; and stressing clarity of financial reporting based on results-based management.

On Friday morning, 14 September, the contact groups on budget and the ten-year strategic plan held a joint meeting. Shikongo, Chair of the contact group on the strategic plan, said that remaining problems in his group depended on decisions of the budget group. Most delegations agreed that the strategic plan is a framework for UNCCD implementation and should be integrated into the programme and budget. Due to time constraints in switching to results-based budgeting at this COP, one delegation suggested that budgeting for the implementation of the strategic plan could be done at COP 9. Another delegation said that the implementation of the strategic plan is almost cost neutral. The Secretariat asked the COP to provide the new Executive Secretary with strategic guidance and necessary tools to implement the UNCCD in its next cycle. Chair Anaedu, agreed, noting that the Executive Secretary also needs flexibility in taking actions.

On a proposal to authorize the Executive Secretary for the biennium 2008-2009 to "notify parties of their contributions for 2008 and 2009 in euros," some delegations proposed that they also be notified in "US dollars." There was also much debate on Secretariat staffing. Some delegations supported the staffing table proposed by the Secretariat, while others objected, especially in relation to the increase of one P-2 position and funding for two frozen general service posts requested by the Secretariat.

Another issue that generated much discussion was the percentage increase in the Secretariat's budget for 2008 and 2009. Various options were tabled by delegations, including: adoption of the Secretariat's proposed budget; a 10%, 5% or 3.5% increase in euro terms; a 5% increase in US dollar terms; and zero nominal growth in US dollar terms. Co-Chair Anaedu explained that a 5% increase in US dollar terms would mean a 10% decrease in euro terms. At 11:10 pm Friday, 14 September, Co-Chairs Buys and Anaedu proposed adopting a decision on a 5% budget increase in euro terms. After three hours of debate, all but two delegations agreed. One delegate had a reservation, but would not block the consensus.

At 6:45 am, Saturday, 15 September, at the final meeting of the COW, Anaedu invited delegations to consider the draft decision on programme and budget for the biennium 2008-2009. Japan said his delegation was unable to accept the budget proposed in the draft decision. As a way forward, he

requested, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, Part II (sessions), Rule 4 (date of sessions), paragraphs 3 and 4, that an Extraordinary COP be held in New York as part of a meeting of the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly.

Swaziland expressed concern about delegating the decision to a group that had not been involved in the UNCCD negotiations, and suggested holding it in Tokyo instead. Australia said her delegation was willing to consider Japan's proposal, and hoped to solve the issue as quickly as possible. Cuba, joined by Argentina and Saudi Arabia, objected to the proposal and suggested continuing the meeting for another 10 hours until a decision was made. Recalling the UNCCD Rules of Procedure, Cuba further proposed that if an Extraordinary COP is to be held, it should take place in the headquarters of the Convention, unless otherwise decided, and must be open to all parties. Portugal expressed disappointment, and hoped that Japan would reconsider its position in the next few weeks, but welcomed the proposal to hold an Extraordinary COP in New York.

Chair Anaedu proposed holding an Extraordinary COP in New York, but not in the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly. He further suggested, and the COW agreed, that: the key delegates who have been involved in the process should participate in the session and agreed text should not be renegotiated.

Following the COW meeting, the plenary convened to consider the programme and budget and the COP decided to hold an Extraordinary COP in New York during the General Assembly meeting to solve the pending issue on budget.

**Final Decision:** The draft decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.27) was not adopted by the COP, because Japan could not agree on paragraph 8, which approves the core budget for the biennium 2008-2009, amounting to €15,049,000. The COP did take a decision, however, to hold an Extraordinary COP in New York during the General Assembly meeting to consider this draft decision and included the agreement that this paragraph will be the only issue for discussion.

The draft decision contains 22 operative paragraphs, including agreements to, *inter alia*: introduce the euro as the accounting currency from 2010-2011; adopt the indicative scale of contributions for 2008 and 2009; ask the Executive Secretary to notify parties of their indicative "euro and US dollar" contributions for 2008 and 2009, which should be payable in "euro or at the current US dollar equivalent;" authorize the Executive Secretary to review, in the 2008-2009 biennium, the Secretariat's structure and allocation of posts in light of the ten-year strategic plan; and note that the operations of the Secretariat and GM must be managed on the basis of the amount of the approved biennium core budget.

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PREPARATION FOR CSD 16 AND CSD 17:** The COW discussed this agenda item on 10 September. Following the introduction of the documentation for this item (ICCD/COP(8)/5), countries noted the opportunity to raise the profile of the UNCCD at CSD 16 and 17, which will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. This agenda item was passed from the COW to the contact group on the CRIC, where it was addressed on Wednesday and Thursday,

12 and 13 September. Discussion revolved around whether the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD could influence the work programme for, or the outcomes of, CSD 16 and CSD 17, and the level of detail they should provide in this regard.

**Final Decision:** Text in the final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.16/Rev.1) requests the Executive Secretary, in cooperation with the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, to actively prepare for and participate in CSD 16 and 17 to ensure that core UNCCD issues are duly considered and a successful outcome achieved from the two sessions. The decision lists four sets of issues for the Executive Secretary to submit for the consideration of the CSD.

**ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES OR INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS TO ASSIST THE COP IN REGULARLY REVIEWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION:** On Wednesday, 12 September, CRIC Chair Moore explained that all decisions related to the CRIC, with the exception of the work programme for CRIC 7, had been passed to the contact group on the CRIC by the COW to facilitate completion of work. The contact group addressed this item on Wednesday and Thursday, 12-13 September. All parties agreed on the desire to renew the CRIC, but disagreed on whether to: make it a permanent body with terms of reference determined at COP 8; make it a permanent body with terms of reference determined at a later date; or renew its mandate for a time-bound period. Parties agreed that, given the time constraints, reviewing the terms of reference would not be feasible at COP 8 but should be addressed at COP 9. One delegation suggested, and other parties agreed, to a compromise in which the CRIC's mandate is renewed but no time constraints would be imposed.

**Final Decision:** In the final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.15), the COP renews the mandate of the CRIC as a subsidiary body of the COP, functioning under its present terms of reference, where applicable, until COP 9, during which the COP shall consider and revise, bearing in mind the ten-year strategic plan, relevant COP 8 decisions and the outcomes of CRIC 7 and 8.

**RULE 47 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE:** This item was considered on Wednesday, 12 September. COW Chair Anaedu invited delegates to consider a draft text for Rule 47 (voting majority required for decisions to be adopted) (ICCD/COP(8)/6). Several delegations said consensus is the best method for multilateral organizations and did not support decision-making procedures by voting. The decision was distributed Friday, 14 September, and was subsequently adopted in the COW and closing plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

**Final Decision:** In the decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.22), the COP requests the Secretariat to include consideration of this outstanding rule of procedure in the agenda of COP 9 and to report on the status of similar rules of procedure in other multilateral environmental agreements.

**AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS:** The *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts (AHGE) met three times from Monday to Thursday, 10-13 September, and considered procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation (ICCD/COP(8)/7) and annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures (ICCD/COP(8)/8). The Secretariat noted that the two issues have been pending since COP 2. Delegations commented that since implementation of the ten-year strategic

plan and the CRIC's future were still under discussion, consideration of the items was premature. The Group drafted two decisions, which the COP adopted on Friday, 14 September.

**Final Decisions:** In the two decisions (ICCD/COP(8)/L.22 and ICCD/COP(8)/L.23), the COP decides to reconvene, at COP 9, the open-ended AHGE to examine further and make recommendations on these two issues; invites any parties and interested institutions and organizations wishing to communicate their views on these issues to do so in writing to the Secretariat by 31 January 2009; requests the Secretariat to prepare two new working documents on these issues; and decides that the AHGE shall take as the basis of its work the new working documents prepared by the Secretariat.

**OUTCOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DESERTS AND DESERTIFICATION (IYDD):** Delegates discussed the report (ICCD/COP(8)/11) for this agenda item on Monday, 10 September. They highlighted events hosted in their countries in relation to the IYDD. Algeria, supported by many other parties, proposed calling on the UN General Assembly to declare 2010-2020 the Decade of Deserts and Desertification. A decision was considered and adopted by the COW and the closing plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

**Final Decision:** The final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.24) requests the Secretariat to explore ways and means to address the recommendations in the report on the outcomes of the IYDD and invites the General Assembly to declare 2010-2020 the Decade of Deserts and Combating Desertification.

**RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SECRETARIAT AND ITS HOST COUNTRY:** This item was discussed in the COW on Monday, 10 September. The Secretariat introduced the report (ICCD/COP(8)/12), highlighting the ways and fora through which cooperation has taken place. Germany thanked the Secretariat for its review of the relations and said it looked forward to meeting the new Executive Secretary to discuss the possibilities of continued cooperation. A decision was considered and adopted by the COW and the closing plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

**Final Decision:** The decision on relations between the Secretariat and its host country (ICCD/COP(8)/L.25) requests the Secretariat to continue developing relations with national, statewide and city-level actors in Germany and to seek cost-effective solutions for official meetings held in Bonn. It invites Germany to continue contributing, on a voluntary basis, to meetings organized in Bonn and to continue to absorb most of the costs and responsibilities for maintaining and operating the Secretariat's premises.

**PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR COP 9:** COP 8 delegates considered the decision for the programme of work at COP 9 during the closing plenary, and adopted it as orally amended to note that the COP will consider the programme and budget for 2010-2011 and not 2010-2012.

**Final Decision:** The decision on the COP 9 programme of work (ICCD/COP(8)/L.26) decides to include the following items on the COP 9, and if necessary COP 10, agendas: programme and budget for 2010-2011; review of implementation of the Convention, including the reports of the CRIC and CST; review of activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other conventions, organizations and

agencies; consideration of the outcome of CSD 16 and CSD 17; outstanding items, including rule 47 of the rules of procedure; preparation for the Decade of Deserts and Combating Desertification; and a report on relations between the secretariat and its host country. The COP also decides to include interactive dialogue sessions with stakeholders, including ministers, NGOs and members of parliament.

**EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF SPAIN:** The COW considered a draft decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.2) on this item on Saturday, 15 September, which was subsequently adopted by the plenary.

**Final Decision:** In this decision, the COP expresses its gratitude to the Government of Spain for having made it possible for the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to be held in the city of Madrid, and requests the Government of Spain to convey to the people of Spain the gratitude of the parties to the Convention for the hospitality and warm welcome.

**DATE AND VENUE OF COP 9:** A draft decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.29) on this item was considered in the COW on Saturday, 15 September, and was subsequently adopted by the plenary.

**Final Decision:** The COP: decides that COP 9 will be held in Bonn, Germany in Autumn 2009, in the event that no party makes an offer to host that session and meet the additional financial cost; invites the Executive Secretary in consultation with the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to accommodate any offer from a party to host COP 9; and requests the Executive Secretary to take necessary measures to prepare for COP 9.

#### **COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION**

CRIC Chair Franklin Moore (US) opened the session on Wednesday, 5 September. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda (ICCD/CRIC(6)/1), except the sub-item on the comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat (ICCD/CRIC(6)/2), which was taken over by the COW. The Committee also adopted its organization of work contained in Annex II of the agenda.

The CRIC met from Wednesday, 5 September, to Friday, 14 September, to consider: the CRIC 5 report; the report on enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention; the GM; financing multilateral agencies and institutions; and the report on the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on national reporting. An open-ended contact group on review of implementation of the Convention was established on Thursday, 6 September, chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland). The contact group met regularly from 6-13 September, and developed five draft decisions. Delegates agreed to eliminate a sixth draft decision, on necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention. At 10:20 pm on Friday, 14 September, the CRIC approved its draft decisions and report, which were adopted by the plenary at 11:30 pm.

In its closing session, the CRIC also nominated and elected by acclamation the following as Vice-Chairs to the Bureau of CRIC 7 and CRIC 8: Hussein Nasrallah (Lebanon) for the Asian

Group; Stephen Muwaya (Uganda) for the African Group; Ogtay Jafarov (Azerbaijan) for the Eastern European Group; Markku Aho (Finland) for the Western European and Other States Group.

**STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION IN ALL REGIONS:** The CRIC addressed the agenda item on review of the implementation of the Convention and of its institutional arrangements on Wednesday and Thursday, 5-6 September, and on Friday, 14 September. On 5 September, Chair Moore introduced the CRIC 5 report (ICCD/CRIC(5)/11), drawing attention to its seven recommendations.

Debate in the contact group on this draft decision revolved around balancing developed and developing country party responsibilities related to: participatory natural resource management; capacity building for NAP implementation; and commitment of special funds to promote participation of NGOs, community-based organizations and other elements of civil society.

Debate also revolved around the role of the GM in facilitating the implementation of the Convention. During the CRIC, opinions on the GM diverged, with some expressing support for, and others disappointment in, the mechanism. Some delegates emphasized the misconception that the GM is a fundraiser. Developing countries highlighted several concerns regarding the GM, including that it: does not benefit all countries and regions; has “unacceptable” criteria for determining support; and oversteps its mandate. One developing country said its dissatisfaction lay in the fact that, while the climate change and biodiversity conventions were initially granted “funding mechanisms,” the UNCCD received only a “broker,” and thus has less funds.

Although several parties stressed the importance of including reference to traditional knowledge in this decision, these were eventually removed, with several other parties stressing that this issue is being addressed in other fora. For this same reason, one delegation requested deleting text related to trade and market regulations, as well as on land tenure, which they argued is a national issue. Parties agreed to add a paragraph related to RCUs, consistent with language agreed in the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan.

**Final Decision:** In the final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.1) the COP:

- invites parties and international institutions to strengthen and standardize UNCCD reporting;
- urges affected country parties to facilitate participation of all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention;
- urges developed country parties and invites international organizations to support capacity building in a sustainable manner in all areas relevant to the implementation of NAPs;
- invites developing countries to develop an enabling environment for sustainable land management and integrated water management;
- urges developed country parties, and invites multilateral organizations, to mobilize and provide substantial financial resources from all sources for implementation of the objectives of the Convention;
- invites parties and international organizations to support participatory natural resource management;

- continues to support, without pre-judging the outcome of the RCU review process outlined in the ten-year strategic plan, existing RCUs.

The COP also requests the GM to: play a more active role in mobilizing resources and maintaining a geographical balance; and to better capitalize on the demand-driven policy formulation process taking place in the context of the Regional Implementation Annexes and the NAPs.

**MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION:** Parties debated the roles that developed and developing country parties should play in resource mobilization. They agreed to delete text to channel investments for sustainable land management through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, but to retain text referring to new modalities of aid.

**Final Decision:** The final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.3) invites affected country parties to make more consistent domestic budget allocations for rural development and advocate a greater focus on the new modalities of aid delivery and urges developed country parties to mainstream sustainable land management into donor programming. Prioritizing strategies and streamlining procedures in the context of the Paris Declaration is also addressed.

**COLLABORATION WITH THE GEF:** During the CRIC, parties expressed differing views regarding the GEF: while several parties thanked the GEF for its support and complimented its reforms, others asked why their projects had not received funding and highlighted difficulties in obtaining timely support. Parties asked the GEF to: equalize its funding across the Rio conventions; help parties obtain co-financing; facilitate resource mobilization from the private sector; and improve communication with national focal points.

Parties in the contact group agreed to delete language related to the Climate Change Funds in the draft decision on the GEF. Discussions included: how the ten-year strategic plan could be brought to the attention of the GEF; how to ensure that the text provided guidance related to the fifth replenishment cycle of the GEF (GEF-5); and the role that the GEF and National Focal Points (NFPs) should play in facilitating access of affected country parties to relevant funding mechanisms as well as NFP involvement in development and implementation of relevant GEF-funded projects.

**Final Decision:** Decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.4: invites the GEF to effectively and expeditiously implement the Focal Area Strategy on Land Degradation for GEF-4; invites the GEF Council to provide adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional financial resources, for this focal area under GEF-5; invites the GEF to consider simplifying its funding procedures; requests the GM to improve assistance to eligible parties, in collaboration with the GEF, in identifying and accessing co-financing from donors; and requests the Executive Secretary to bring the ten-year strategic plan to the GEF Council’s attention.

**ACTIVITIES FOR PROMOTING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER RELEVANT CONVENTIONS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES:** Parties agreed that preambular text on this decision should recognize the need to strengthen trans-

disciplinary scientific understanding of the linkages between biodiversity, climate change and land degradation in order to improve coordination between the Rio conventions. One delegation requested that language referring to “conservation” of forests, biodiversity and land and water be replaced by language related to “sustainable use” and “sustainable management.”

**Final Decision:** The final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.5) encourages affected country parties to establish linkages between NAPs and areas driving international support and to develop a framework to promote synergies in implementing national plans under the three Rio conventions. Developed country parties are encouraged to help developing countries access new and additional financial resources, including through complementarities with other multilateral environmental agreements.

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

During both the CRIC and the contact group, some parties argued that the AHWG had not fulfilled its terms of reference on developing guidelines to improve reporting procedures. In the contact group, one delegation suggested, and others agreed in principle, to ask the Secretariat and the GM to seek external support to develop reporting guidelines prior to CRIC 7, for consideration at the CRIC. However, they could not decide whether to request the “Secretariat and the GM,” “Secretariat in collaboration with the GM,” or “Secretariat with advice from the GM” to develop reporting guidelines. This debate on the Secretariat-GM relationship stemmed from discussions in the CRIC, in which parties suggested the GM should: work better with the Secretariat; develop a joint work programme with the Secretariat; and integrate into the Secretariat. The Group agreed to use language adopted by the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan.

Parties further wanted to request the Secretariat to consult with the secretariats of the other Rio conventions to harmonize reporting systems, but reconsidered language to this effect when they were informed that UNFCCC and CBD efforts to harmonize their national reports had encountered legal challenges.

**Final Decision:** In its final decision (ICCD/COP(8)/L.6), parties request the Executive Secretary, taking into account the views of the GM and seeking external support, to develop draft reporting guidelines, in line with the ten-year strategic plan and before CRIC 7, on support to the implementation of the Convention to the COP. The COP also requests the Secretariat to consult with the other secretariats of the JLG and advise on ways to make reporting more efficient.

**PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR CRIC 7:** This decision was developed by the Friends of the Chair of the open-ended contact group on the ten-year strategic plan, and was adopted by the COW and plenary on Saturday, 15 September.

**Final Decision:** Decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.19/Rev.1 decides that CRIC 7 will: be a special intersessional session to consider methodological matters to advance the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan; consider the work programmes of the

Secretariat, Secretariat and the GM, GM, CST and CRIC; and consider indicators and monitoring for the ten-year strategic plan and the format of future CRIC meetings.

#### **COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Chair William Dar (the Philippines) opened the eighth session of the CST on Tuesday, 4 September, and urged the Committee to focus on a science, rather than process-driven, approach and to not “shy away” from reforms.

Delegates adopted the agenda and the organization of work (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/1), as orally revised to rearrange the topics in the Group of Experts’ report, based on the availability of the presenters. Portugal, on behalf of the EU, requested that implications of the IIWG on the CST also be considered. The Committee elected as Vice-Chairs: Michel Sedogo (Burkina Faso), Uladzimir Sauchanka (Belarus), Richard Escadafal (France), and Maria Nery Urquiza Rodriguez (Cuba). Rodriguez also served as Rapporteur.

The CST met from Tuesday to Friday, 4-7 September, to consider items including: roster of independent experts; improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST; report of the CST Bureau; summary of activities of the Bureau during the intersessional period; the UNCCD fellowship programme; review of the Group of Experts’ functions and work and procedures for its renewal; report on progress of the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project; CST programme of work; and priority theme of the effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation: assessment, field experience gained, and integration of mitigation and adaptation practices for livelihood improvement.

A contact group was created Thursday, 6 September, to develop draft decisions, which were approved by the CST on Friday, 7 September. The decisions were adopted by the COP plenary on 7 September.

**PRIORITY THEME:** On Wednesday and Thursday, 5-6 September, the CST considered the priority theme for its ninth session: Effects of Climatic Variations and Human Activities on Land Degradation: Assessment, Field Experience Gained, and Integration of Mitigation and Adaptation Practices for Livelihood Improvement (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/7 and ICCD/COP(8)/CST/MISC.1). Representatives from Bulgaria, Mongolia and Mexico offered papers on their countries’ environmental challenges, research and lessons learned related to this theme. The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) presented a review of the connections between climate change and desertification, and their effects on poverty and food insecurity. During the discussion, Tunisia emphasized the importance of traditional and local knowledge in identifying strategies to combat desertification, and Iceland reported on the International Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change, which he said had recommended asking the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to develop a special report on this issue. No decision was taken on this agenda item.

**ROSTER OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS:** On Thursday, 6 September, the CST considered the Roster of Independent Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/9). The Secretariat highlighted the need to update the roster. No comments were offered.

A draft decision was introduced on Friday, 7 September. Brazil suggested changing the reference to proposing new candidates to achieve better representation of “women,” to a call for better “gender balance.” The CST adopted the draft decision with this amendment.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on the roster of independent experts (ICCD/COP(7)/L.7), the COP encourages parties to revise and update the details of national experts already in the database, and to propose new candidates to achieve better gender balance and representation of all relevant disciplines. It also invites parties that have not done so to submit nominations no later than six months before COP 9.

**UNCCD FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME:** On Wednesday, 5 September, the CST considered the report on a UNCCD fellowship programme (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5). Several delegates highlighted their countries’ own training programmes and areas on which training could focus. Israel said it would offer funding for ten post-graduate students at the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research to match UNCCD funding. The US inquired about the programme’s funding source.

A draft decision was introduced on Friday, 7 September. Syria objected to referring to specific institutions in the decision, and proposed deleting a preambular paragraph noting the offer of the Blaustein Institute. The decision was adopted as amended.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on the UNCCD fellowship programme (ICCD/COP(8)/L.8), the COP requests the Secretariat to establish a UNCCD fellowship programme, subject to voluntary funding, according to the terms of reference annexed to document ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5. It also encourages parties and other interested organizations to make available the necessary funds.

**FINAL REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS:** On Tuesday and Wednesday, 4-5 September, the CST considered the final report of the Group of Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1 to Add.9). The Group’s Coordinator, Alejandro León (Chile), introduced its work, following which delegates addressed the studies undertaken by this Group, facilitated by the lead expert for each study.

Elena Abraham (Argentina) presented “Benchmarks and indicators for monitoring and assessment of desertification” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1). Delegates called attention to the resources necessary to create and implement benchmarks and indicators. Brazil expressed concern with the adoption of models that are not specific to a country, stating that they could be a constraint on sovereignty. Romania recalled that this topic gave the CST 6 Bureau “headaches,” and proposed relying on existing indicators.

Maurizio Sciortino (Italy) presented “Communication strategy: development of a mechanism for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network – THEMANET” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.2). Many parties acknowledged the importance of the tool, while others sought clarification on, *inter alia*: links to other databases, topics covered, languages used, inclusion of traditional knowledge, funding options for maintenance and running costs, and the target audience.

Anders Hjort-af-Ornäs (Sweden) presented “Integrative assessment methodology for poverty and land degradation” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.3). Participants inquired about how the study countries were selected and suggested alternative indicators.

Delegates received a copy of “Opportunities for Synergy Among the Environmental Conventions: Results of National and Local Level Workshops,” which was produced in relation to the Group of Experts’ work on “Development of synergy with other related conventions” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.4). No comments were offered.

H.P. Singh (India) presented the report on “Case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for users in implementing the Convention” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.5). Egypt noted the importance of such research in demonstrating to policy makers the economic value of science. France underscored the value of comparative analyses of case studies.

Kazuhiko Takeuchi (Japan) presented the study on methodologies for the assessment of desertification at global, regional and local levels (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.6). Several speakers discussed their monitoring system experiences.

Alejandro León presented “Identification of perceived gaps between biophysical, socioeconomic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification, their causes and ways of eliminating them” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.7). Many parties commended the work, and Italy noted his country’s creation of a traditional knowledge center. Other parties emphasized the lack of resources for acquiring and disseminating traditional and modern knowledge and for technology transfer. Brazil highlighted traditional knowledge ownership rights, and Kenya asked about the intellectual property rights associated with technology transfer. NGO representatives stressed the need to involve communities throughout the project cycle.

Castillo Victor Sanchez (Spain) presented “Guidelines for early warning systems” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.8). The UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction said it is willing to assist in the mobilization of resources to promote activities in the area of early warning systems to mitigate the effects of drought and land degradation.

Alejandro León presented “Guidelines for updating the *World Atlas of Desertification*” (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.9). The US said that relying on benchmarks and indicators may not be appropriate, given the previous debate on them, and suggested creating a web-based publication that could be updated as necessary.

A draft decision was introduced in the CST on Friday, 7 September and adopted without amendment.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on the final report of the Group of Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/L.9), the COP takes note of the final report of the Group of Experts in ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1 to Add.9, and encourages parties to consider and use, as appropriate, the final report in the implementation of the NAPs.

**LAND DEGRADATION ASSESSMENT IN DRYLANDS (LADA) PROJECT:** On Thursday, 6 September, the Secretariat announced the report on progress of the LADA project (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/9). No comments were offered.



A draft decision was introduced on Friday, 7 September. World Vision International proposed that LADA take into account the needs of “stakeholders” as well as focal points, and the decision was adopted as amended.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on the LADA project (ICCD/COP(8)/L.10), the COP encourages the continuation of the work on the LADA and the involvement of experts from the roster of independent experts in assessments, invites the CST Bureau to take the necessary action to strengthen its links with the work of the LADA, and invites the LADA to involve, and take account of the needs of, the focal points and stakeholders in its future work.

**PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE CST:** On Thursday, 6 September, delegates discussed the priority theme for CST 9. Speakers agreed with the need to align the work programme with the ten-year strategic plan and offered options for the theme. Japan suggested benchmarks and indicators, monitoring and assessment and early warning systems; synergies among the Rio conventions; and capacity development for local people. South Africa suggested facilitating the harmonization of national reports, early warning systems, and managing traditional knowledge. Spain proposed examining the costs of not combating land degradation and desertification. Brazil agreed on the importance of traditional knowledge and said any discussion should include benefit sharing and be in the context of negotiations in the CBD.

Chair Dar appointed Canada and Romania as Co-Chairs of a contact group, which developed the proposal to consider bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment to support decision-making in land management. A draft decision was introduced and approved by the CST without comment on Friday, 7 September.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on the CST programme of work (ICCD/COP(8)/L.11), the COP decides that the CST 9 priority theme will be “bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management.”

**FUNCTIONING OF THE CST:** On Wednesday, 5 September, delegates discussed the summary of the activities of the Bureau, including recommendations to improve its functioning (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/4). During the discussion of the draft decision, which was introduced on Friday, 7 September, the draft was revised to clarify that the reference to “holding one intersessional meeting and a shorter meeting period that will be held in conjunction with the COP” referred to the possibility of two meetings.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on the functioning of the CST (ICCD/COP(8)/L.12), the COP requests the Secretariat to facilitate the convening of at least one intersessional meeting of the CST Bureau per year, requests the CST Bureau to increase cooperation with other conventions and scientific processes, and decides to consider the possibility of the CST holding one intersessional meeting and one shorter meeting that will be held in conjunction with the COP.

**NETWORKING OF INSTITUTIONS, AGENCIES AND BODIES:** On Friday, 7 September, CST delegates considered a draft decision on networking of institutions, agencies and bodies, which was adopted without amendment in plenary.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on the networking of institutions, agencies and bodies (ICCD/COP(8)/L.13), the COP requests the CST Bureau, in collaboration with the lead institution or consortium selected to co-organize the next CST scientific meeting, to link with networks, institutions, agencies and bodies to address the thematic priority, and to include NGOs and other civil society stakeholders in the network.

**RESHAPING THE OPERATION OF THE CST IN LINE WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE IIWG TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:** On Wednesday, 5 September, CST delegates considered the review of the functions and the work of the Group of Experts, and procedures for the renewal of the membership of the Group of Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/6). Many speakers highlighted that the Group of Experts did not have funding to conduct its work, and that a new body should have funding. The European Commission, on behalf of the EU, distributed a draft decision calling for the CST to: be organized in a scientific and technical conference-style format; focus on one thematic topic; and involve an institution or consortium with relevant expertise. Brazil said the CST’s work must remain country-driven. The contact group discussed format and budget options for the EU proposal.

A draft decision was introduced on Friday, 7 September. Argentina and Brazil offered amendments to specify that the proposed conference-style format would be party-led, rather than “jointly” organized by the CST Bureau and a lead institution/consortium. An additional revision was made to request that the Secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, consider mechanisms to secure additional funds. EU-proposed text to encourage the lead institution/consortium to assist in the mobilization of resources was also added.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on reshaping the operation of the CST in line with the recommendations of the IIWG ten-year strategic plan (ICCD/COP(8)/L.14), the COP decides that each ordinary session shall be organized predominantly in a scientific and technical conference-style format, by the CST Bureau in consultation with the lead institution/consortium. It requests the UNCCD Secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, to consider mechanisms to secure additional funds to support attendance, and encourages the lead institution/consortium to assist in the mobilization of resources.

### CLOSING PLENARY

COP President Narbona called the closing plenary to order at 10:55 pm on Friday, 14 September. She called attention to the Madrid Declaration from the Special Segment, said that governments at COP 8 were reaffirming their political commitment to this issue and emphasized the importance of indicators to assess results through the ten-year strategic plan as well as assessments of the costs of inaction in affected areas. She declared that, as COP 8 President, she would work to ensure that the Convention moves forward and asked for delegates’ cooperation throughout the next two years.

Narbona then invited Hama Arba Diallo, former UNCCD Executive Secretary, to address the plenary. Diallo paid tribute to Spain’s commitment to the Convention and for its decision to host COP 8. He congratulated Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary-designate, on his appointment. He encouraged the COP to support the Italian initiative regarding the right to water,

and highlighted the importance of access to energy. He said parties must fully implement and feel morally obliged to the Convention, and that the only criterion for management is a duty to improve the lives of those in the drylands. He expressed his hope that the Secretariat would be given the resources it needs to carry out its job, and closed stating that the “struggle goes on.” Delegates gave him a standing ovation.

CRIC Chair Moore introduced the CRIC 6 decisions, which delegates adopted. Delegates also adopted the draft decision contained in the report of the Bureau of the Conference (ICCD/COP(8)/15) on credentials of delegations (ICCD/COP(8)/15). Decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.30/Rev.1 notes that CRIC 7 will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 20-29 October 2008. Parties took note, with appreciation, of the Declaration of Members of Parliament, contained in the Report of the seventh Round Table of Members of Parliament (ICCD/COP(8)/L.28), and agreed to include it as an annex to the COP 8 report. Delegates elected by acclamation Israel Torres (Panama) as Chair of CRIC 7 and 8. They then adopted two draft decisions from the AHGE: procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation (ICCD/COP(8)/L.22) and annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures (ICCD/COP(8)/L.23). The closing plenary was suspended at 11:45 pm to permit the contact group on programme and budget to conclude its deliberations, and the preparation and distribution of outstanding draft decisions.

COP 8 Vice-President Mary Rowen (US) reconvened the closing plenary twice on Saturday morning, 15 September. At 6:20 am, delegates adopted 16 draft decisions, taking into account the amendments proposed in the final COW, which convened intermittently with the closing plenary.

On the Programme of Work of COP 9 (ICCD/COP(8)/L.26), Spain emphasized the need to ensure the effective participation of civil society, requested that modalities be put in place for their involvement, and said they should be included as a COP 9 agenda item.

Plenary agreed to adopt the Draft Report of the Session (ICCD/COP(8)/L.28), circulated in English only, and to authorize the Rapporteur to finalize it with assistance from the Secretariat. Plenary also adopted the decision on Expressions of Gratitude to the Government and People of Spain (ICCD/COP(8)/L.2). Argentina, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, thanked Spain and noted Argentina’s historic links with Spain.

At 6:39 am, the plenary was suspended to allow the COW to adopt its decision on the way forward on the programme and budget. The COW concluded its work at 6:45 am.

When plenary reconvened at 7:33 am, Vice-President Rowen highlighted that the COP had adopted the ten-year strategic plan and said she looked forward to the successful implementation of the decisions adopted at the COP. She asked delegates to consider the proposal to hold an Extraordinary COP, taking into account the elements for the meeting that were orally presented to the COW by Chair Anaedu. Responding to a question from Portugal, on behalf of the EU, regarding whether or not Japan’s proposal had been adopted by the COW, UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten affirmed that it had been adopted, reiterated that an Extraordinary COP will be held, and said it

would be in New York, with Terms of Reference as elaborated by the COW Chair. Noting that no delegation requested the floor to make a closing statement, Vice-President Rowen invited de Kalbermatten to make his closing remarks. He said that, given the extraordinary manner in which the session had ended, he would set aside his speech. He thanked the Secretariat staff for their patience throughout COP 9, expressed his belief that all was not lost, noted that the Convention had gained a ten-year strategic plan, and said he could not commit the new Executive Secretary to implement it without the resources to do so. He thanked the Chairs of the contact groups for their “splendid” work, and expressed hope that their “kindred spirit would carry us to COP 9.”

Spain thanked delegations for their participation, noted that the session had been productive, expressed hope that the few problems encountered would be resolved at the next COP, and said the Ministry of Environment would continue to give impetus to the ten-year strategic plan. Vice-President Rowen gavelled the meeting to a close at 7:43 am, Saturday, 15 September 2007.

## A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COP 8

### *BUILDING AN OASIS IN A DESERT OF POLITICAL WILL*

The dancing and applause over “symbolic draft decisions” that reportedly followed some of the contact groups’ deliberations at the UNCCD COP 8 capture the feeling that pervaded the Palacio de Congresos in Madrid on 14 September, the COP’s last official day. Many looked to COP 8’s primary achievements, namely the adoption of a ten-year strategic plan and refocusing of its institutions, as a way to move the Convention forward. They were satisfied that the strategic plan provides a shared vision of where the COP needs to go over the next decade, offers greater clarity in the purpose and expectations of its various institutions, and prioritizes the activities of the Secretariat.

Reports that consensus seemed to be emerging in the programme and budget contact group to increase the Secretariat’s budget by 5% in euro terms (a 21% increase in US dollar terms) further raised participants’ assessments that COP 8’s decisions could turn the Convention in a new direction. Many departed the conference hall early because few anticipated that the sense of euphoria could quickly change to a sense of gloom in the closing plenary during the early hours of Saturday morning, when one delegation failed to approve the budget in the closing plenary. This analysis focuses on the gains made in the delicate negotiating environment of COP 8, and assesses how the COP’s inability to approve a budget and the decision to hold an Extraordinary COP in New York before the end of 2007 may impact the realization of those gains.

### *THE OASIS – THE TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN*

With the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan at COP 8, there was a feeling that the problems that had impeded the effective implementation of the UNCCD might finally be addressed. The ten-year strategic plan was recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the UN to provide a common and focused vision for the Convention and to address operational inefficiencies within its institutions. It strives to link the work programmes of the Convention’s institutions to this

common vision, clarifies their mandates and methods of work, and institutionalizes a results-based management approach. Delegates' desire to change the Convention's course was evident in their statements at the opening plenary, during which they expressed their support for the strategic plan, thus facilitating its adoption without renegotiation and paving the way for consensus over the direction the COP institutions, such as the CRIC, CST, GM-Secretariat relationship and the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs).

**Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention:** The CRIC is supposed to review the implementation of the Convention and facilitate information exchange on measures adopted by parties. While delegations appreciate its utility in theory, the CRIC has been a source of frustration because many feel it lacks clear terms of reference and that its method of work, primarily through the delivery of statements about country reports, has not helped parties to generate the knowledge they need to improve policy and Convention implementation. Many parties suggested that the new panel format adopted at CRIC 5 in March 2007 began to address this problem, but observed that decisions related to how reports are analyzed and packaged, and how lessons are learned, delivered and received, are key to the CRIC's future success. To this end, parties decided to renew the CRIC's mandate, but did so with the understanding that this has been clarified under the ten-year strategic plan, which provides requirements for performance monitoring, and that its terms of reference will be revisited and revised as necessary at COP 9, thus providing checks and balances to promote its improved functioning in the future.

**Committee on Science and Technology:** CST 8 received its Group of Experts' final report, which consisted of a series of research projects and resulting recommendations. In the end, however, the Group of Experts mechanism was not viewed as the proper format to bring scientific advice related to drylands and desertification into the Convention, given the range in the quality of the reports and limited engagement of some of the Group's experts, due in part to the fact that the Group was not given a budget. Realizing that this model was not effective, the CST's decision simply "takes note" of the Group's report and encourages parties to use, as appropriate, the final report in their implementation activities.

Thus, the CST turned its attention to developing an alternative format that would engage the scientific community in the issues on the UNCCD agenda, settling on a proposal calling for future CST meetings to be organized predominantly in a scientific and technical conference-style format by the CST Bureau, in consultation with a lead institution/consortium. Scientists in the room were clearly excited at the prospect of engaging in scientific exchanges at upcoming meetings and believed that scientists' attendance at the next CST session would increase. In addition, some hoped that the COP 8 decision to schedule CST 9 and CRIC 7 together and with a coordinated agenda would permit new synergies between these two bodies. Some noted that challenges still remain, especially since this new format still lacks a mechanism to translate scientific advice into CST recommendations that can aid national governments in their implementation efforts.

**GM-Secretariat Relationship:** The relationship between the GM and the Secretariat came under intense scrutiny during COP 8. Despite their preferences for either the GM or the Secretariat, delegations across the board highlighted concerns about their overlapping activities and lack of coordination and mutual support. The decision to have the JIU carry out an independent assessment of the GM, as had happened with the Secretariat following the COP 6 decision to that effect, was the compromise that many hoped would lead to positive change. This COP 8 decision was considered as pivotal by those who: consider the GM to be misunderstood given the changing context of development finance; appreciate its reforms, which increase its capacity to act as an effective broker to mobilize resources; and want it to "speak the same language" as the Secretariat. The clear mandates that many hope will result from the review could help improve the relationship between the GM and those country parties that have been frustrated by its current operation, or at the very least provide clear expectations of what it is supposed to do.

**Regional Coordination Units:** The value added of the three RCUs in Africa, Asia and Latin America has been a point of contention at UNCCD COPs since they were introduced at COP 3. Optimists agree that the decision to continue supporting the RCUs, pending a review that will be considered by the COP, offers a turning point. Pessimists note that the COP still has not officially institutionalized the RCUs, and believe that they will continue to face many difficulties in performing a coordination role in their regions. Consequently, observers note that the RCUs will have to demonstrate their worth, both in their own right and in relation to comparable mechanisms. Either way, the COP decision may have set in motion a reform process to ensure that the RCUs are efficient, different and responsive to their constituencies, otherwise they will cause their own undoing.

### **THE DESERT – BUDGET BATTLES**

The Secretariat's budget has increasingly become the most sensitive COP issue. Among the reasons cited by participants for the contention over the budget are: the significant cut to the Secretariat's core budget for the biennium 2006-2007 during the negotiating process at COP 7; the depreciation of the dollar – the UN's accounting currency – relative to the euro, which is the Secretariat's main currency; and the decrease in voluntary contributions to the Secretariat coupled with increased demands on it from parties. Together this has resulted in staff layoffs and an increased work load. Furthermore, the budget level has become a signal of parties' political commitment to the Convention.

Some delegates arrived in Madrid with instructions from their capitals to agree to a zero nominal growth budget due in part to uncertainty regarding who would be appointed as the next Executive Secretary. Thus initial reports that the contact group on programme and budget had agreed to increase the budget by 5% in euro terms, led participants to highlight the decision as a positive political signal, because it was higher than any previous increase in the UNCCD budget. This change was attributed to the positive outcome of the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan. Furthermore, during the second week of the COP, parties had an opportunity to meet the Executive Secretary-designate, Luc Gnacadja. Although few knew him, many approved of his credentials. Thus, they said that their approval

of a modest budget increase sought to demonstrate their support, while allowing them time to observe his performance. However, a budget was not approved because Japan held to its position for zero nominal growth.

Although many delegations were disappointed by the outcome, participants in the contact group reported that Japan consistently held to his instructions, going along with the proposed increase while reserving the right to consult his government. Some delegates agree that his Prime Minister's resignation during the COP ultimately left him with no room to make a last minute deviation from his instructions. Others note that the emphasis on modest growth budgets is not unique to the UNCCD. Rather, it is a growing trend in development aid and multilateral processes. While ebbing resource flows to the budgets of multilateral environmental agreements is not unique to the UNCCD, it remains the primary lens through which commitment to this Convention is gauged.

### MOVING FORWARD

While disappointment spilled out of the Palacio de Congressos as the last remaining delegates left the building at 8:30 am on Saturday, 15 September, the big question that remained was what effect the Extraordinary COP in New York might have on COP 8's outcomes. Some believe that governments will positively assess the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan and the appointment of the new Executive Secretary, and approve an increase in the budget, which could lead to a renewed faith in, and commitment to, the Convention. Others believe that no budget increase will be approved and that the Secretariat will continue to face financial difficulties. In this case, the pressure on the Executive Secretary will be even greater to deliver visible signs of his management skills in order to re-engage the international community in the Convention. In the final analysis, as Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, told delegates during the round table discussion, "political will, not any amount of institutional reform," will ultimately determine whether a convention is able to deliver.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON CLIMATE CHANGE:** A high-level ministerial meeting will take place on 24 September 2007, at UN headquarters in New York. The purpose of the event is to promote dialogue, highlight priority issues within four broad thematic areas, and mobilize support at the highest level for a strong political signal to the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali that governments are ready to accelerate work under the UNFCCC. For more information, see <http://www.un.org/climatechange/2007highlevel/index.shtml>

**EXPERT GROUP MEETING: INNOVATIVE FINANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** The Division for Sustainable Development, which acts as Secretariat to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), will organize this meeting from 18-19 October 2007, in New York. It will focus particularly on the themes of CSD-16: agriculture, desertification, drought, rural development, including a special focus on Africa. For more information, contact: the Division for

Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: [dsd@un.org](mailto:dsd@un.org); internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdiissues/finance/egm2007/index.htm>

### EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE UNCCD COP:

This extraordinary meeting of the UNCCD COP will take place during the UN General Assembly in New York to resolve the question of the UNCCD budget that was left pending from COP 8. The date will be announced by the Secretariat. For more information, contact the UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: [secretariat@unccd.int](mailto:secretariat@unccd.int); internet: <http://www.unccd.int>.

**CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING FOR AFRICA:** This meeting will take place from 22-25 October 2007, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It will be organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact: Josué Dioné; tel: +251 11 551 0406; fax: +251 11 551 0350; e-mail: [jdione@uneca.org](mailto:jdione@uneca.org); internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/rim.htm>.

**FIFTH TRONDHEIM CONFERENCE ON BIODIVERSITY:** The fifth Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity will be held from 29 October - 2 November 2007, in Trondheim, Norway, under the theme "Ecosystems and people - biodiversity for development - the road to 2010 and beyond." For more information, contact: Norway's Directorate for Nature Management; tel: +47-73-58-05-00, fax: +47-73-58-05-01; e-mail: [trondheim.conference@dirnat.no](mailto:trondheim.conference@dirnat.no); internet: <http://www.trondheimconference.org/>

**TPN6 WORKSHOP ON ENABLING POLICIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNCCD:** This workshop is expected to take place in November 2007 in Islamabad, Pakistan. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: [secretariat@unccd.int](mailto:secretariat@unccd.int); internet: <http://www.unccd.int>.

**CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING FOR WESTERN ASIA:** This meeting will convene from 4-6 November 2007, in Cairo, Egypt. It will be organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact: Anhar Hegazi; tel: +961-1-978502; e-mail: [hegazi@un.org](mailto:hegazi@un.org); internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/rim.htm>

**27TH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE:** IPCC-27 will take place from 12-16 November 2007, in Valencia, Spain, and will focus on the adoption of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report. For more information, contact: Rudie Bourgeois, IPCC Secretariat; tel: +41-22-730-8208; fax: +41-22-730-8025; e-mail: [IPCCSec@wmo.int](mailto:IPCCSec@wmo.int); internet: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

**INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE ON IMPACTS AND ADVANCED CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGIES FOR THE AFRICAN AND MEDITERRANEAN REGIONS:** This meeting will convene from 18-20 November 2007, in Tunis, Tunisia. For more information, contact: Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, General Direction of Environment and Quality of Life; tel: +216-70-728-679; fax: +216-70-728-595; e-mail: [DGEQV@mineat.gov.tn](mailto:DGEQV@mineat.gov.tn).

**CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**

**FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC:** This meeting will take place from 26-27 November 2007, in Jakarta, Indonesia. It will be organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact Hitomi Rankine, Environmental Affairs Officer; tel: +662-288-1234; fax: +662-288-1059; e-mail: rankine.unescap@un.org; internet: <http://www.unescap.org/esd/rim/16th/>

**CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING FOR**

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:** This meeting will take place from 28-29 November 2007, in Santiago, Chile. It will be organized by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact: Marianne Schaper; tel: +56-2-471-2000; fax: +56-2-208-0252; e-mail: Marianne.SCHAPER@cepal.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/rim.htm>.

**UNFCCC COP 13 AND MOP 3 FOR THE KYOTO**

**PROTOCOL:** These meetings will convene from 3-14 December 2007, in Bali, Indonesia. These meetings will coincide with the 27th meetings of the UNFCCC's subsidiary bodies and the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Further Commitments from Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol. COP 13 and COP/MOP 3 are also expected to be accompanied by a UNFCCC Dialogue on Long-Term Cooperative Action on Climate Change and various other events. For more information, contact the UNFCCC Secretariat: tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: [secretariat@unfccc.int](mailto:secretariat@unfccc.int); Internet: <http://www.unfccc.int>.

**CSD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**

**FOR EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA:** This meeting will convene from 28-29 January 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland. It will be organized by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and will prepare for CSD-16. For more information, contact: Monika Linn; e-mail: [monika.linn@unece.org](mailto:monika.linn@unece.org); internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/rim.htm>.

**DELHI SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT**

**(DSDS) 2008: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE:** This meeting will convene from 7-9 February 2008, in New Delhi, India. It will offer a platform for leading figures from North and South to address climate change and sustainable development. For more information, contact: Summit Secretariat, TERI; tel: +91 11 24682100 / 41504900; fax: +91 11 24682144 / 24682145; e-mail: [dsds@teri.res.in](mailto:dsds@teri.res.in); internet: <http://www.teriin.org/dsds/2008/index.htm>

**CSD-16:** This meeting will take place from 5-16 May 2008, at UN headquarters in New York. This review session will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. For more information, contact: Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: [dsd@un.org](mailto:dsd@un.org); internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd>

**NINTH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:** CBD

COP-9 will take place from 19-30 May 2008, in Bonn, Germany, including a high level segment from 28-30 May. For more

information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int); internet: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=COP-09>

**CRIC 7 AND CST 9:** Based on COP 8 decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.30/Rev.1, CRIC 7 will convene from 20-29 October 2008, in Istanbul, Turkey. Based on COP 8 decision ICCD/COP(8)/L.17, CST 9 shall be held in conjunction with this session of the CRIC. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: [secretariat@unccd.int](mailto:secretariat@unccd.int); internet: <http://www.unccd.int>.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING**

**FOR CSD-17:** This meeting will convene from 23-27 February 2009, at UN headquarters in New York. Participants will prepare for the May 2009 policy session of CSD-17, which will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. For more information, contact: Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: [dsd@un.org](mailto:dsd@un.org); internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd>

**CSD-17:** This meeting will convene from 4-15 May 2009, at UN headquarters in New York. For more information, contact: Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs; DESA Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: [dsd@un.org](mailto:dsd@un.org); internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd>

**UNCCD COP 9:** UNCCD COP 9 is expected to be held in Bonn, Germany, in Autumn 2009, in the event that no party makes an offer to host that session and meet the additional financial costs. For more information, contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: [secretariat@unccd.int](mailto:secretariat@unccd.int); internet: <http://www.unccd.int>

**GLOSSARY**

AHGE	<i>Ad Hoc</i> Group of Experts
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
COW	Committee of the Whole
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIWG	Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group
IYDD	International Year on Deserts and Desertification
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JLG	Joint Liaison Group
LADA	Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
NAP	National Action Programme
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change