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INCD HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 11 JANUARY 1995

The Committee first accredited an additional 23 NGOs to the INCD (A/AC.241/9/Add.8). There are now a total of 318 accredited NGOs. Delegates then continued their discussion on the work programme for the interim period and preparation for the Conference of the Parties (COP). The afternoon session was dedicated to a discussion on urgent action for Africa.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE INTERIM PERIOD AND PREPARATION FOR THE COP

MAURITANIA supported the G-77 and China's statement on Tuesday on this item and expressed concern about the calls to reduce the role of the Secretariat. **MOROCCO** stated that urgent action for Africa corresponds to Article 7 of the African Annex and enables African countries, in collaboration with the international community, to implement those parts of the Convention that deal with programmes of action. The Interim Secretariat should play an effective role, in line with Article 18 of the African Annex, in particular in information dissemination and facilitating consultative processes in programme preparation.

TUNISIA outlined the measures it has taken to implement the resolution. A coordinating body comprising different sectors has been set up. Tunisia is also part of the sub-regional Maghreb Union that has developed a plan of action, containing eight technical projects, to combat desertification. It is also part of the African Contact Group mandated by the OAU to negotiate the implementation of the CCD with developed countries.

The PHILIPPINES, on behalf of the G-77 and China, proposed the creation of two working groups. One working group would deal with financial issues and the other with scientific and technological matters. The Plenary would deal with matters such as the COP's rules of procedure, terms of reference for the Secretariat and information dissemination. The Plenary could also function as a working group of the whole or work through *ad hoc* groups to address implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa. Therefore, the Interim Secretariat should prepare timely and adequate documentation and facilitate decision-making at the first COP. **KENYA** and the **SUDAN** supported these proposals.

ECUADOR said that, in her country, erosion has taken place and this has led to the creation of deserts. Ecuador supports the Convention and is planning to sign it in the coming days. **GHANA** said that the Interim Secretariat (IS) will need to function as a coordinating and facilitating body. The IS must also undertake public awareness programmes. A scientific working group, composed of scientists from developing and developed countries, should be convened to discuss problems as they arise.

NORWAY said that the IS should play the role of facilitator and coordinator and should start a bidding process for a host organization for the global mechanism and then provide INCD-7 with a paper on the advantages and disadvantages of each bidder. Drawing from the experiences of other conventions while being innovative, the IS should: draft the rules of procedure; prepare background documents on financial arrangements for the COP, subsidiary bodies and communication and information; and prepare a paper providing a legal analysis of the options and modalities of using existing organizations. She supported the establishment of two working groups with a pragmatic distribution of tasks. Norway prefers an informal Plenary, similar to the first INCD session, to deal with urgent action for Africa.

SWITZERLAND supported the idea of two working groups. The role of the IS should be differentiated from that of the Permanent Secretariat, which should not be operative but of facilitator and coordinator. **UGANDA** said that since the conclusion and signing of the Convention emphasis has been put on the question of information exchange, dissemination and public awareness. The Committee must go beyond this and look at the tangible actions that need to be taken with regard to Africa.

BOLIVIA reported that his country has created a ministry for sustainable development, based on economic development, social equity, rational management of natural resources, protection of the environment and broad popular participation. Bolivia is also working on its national action programme. The IS should promote public awareness. **CHINA** outlined the activities it had undertaken to combat desertification. It has: established a national committee that is assisted by three centres to oversee the implementation of the CCD; prepared a national programme of action; started a process to develop legislation to facilitate this process; and prepared public awareness programmes.

NIGER stressed that the resolution on urgent action for Africa should not be relegated to second place. He stated that while there are three levels of implementation — socio-technical, political and juridical — the implementation of the resolution provides for the first two, while awaiting the fulfilment of the juridical process.

BRAZIL stated that this session should address the resolution on Africa and go beyond information sharing to collective, not just bilateral, action. Brazil, supported by **COLOMBIA**, also urged that action for other regions should also be discussed. **BENIN** outlined the seven activities it has undertaken since Paris which include: preparing an action plan; public awareness and training campaigns; provision of institutional frameworks to work out the national programmes; developing partnerships with the donor community; and resources mobilization.

PERU outlined the social and economic effects of desertification in his country, and appealed for guaranteed and

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*© <enb@igc.apc.org> is written and edited by Pamela Chasek <pchasek@pipeline.com>, Elisabeth Corell <elico@tema.liu.se>, Langston James Goree VI "Kimo" <kimo@pipeline.com> and Wagaki Mwangi <econews@gn.apc.org>. General support for the publication of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* has been provided by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (iisd@web.apc.org), the Government of Denmark, the Pew Charitable Trusts through the Pew Global Stewardship Initiative, and the World Bank. Specific funding for coverage of the INCD has been provided by the United Nations Environment Programme. The authors can be contacted at their electronic mail addresses and by phone and fax at +1-212-888-2737. IISD can be contacted by phone at +1-204-958-7700 and by fax at +1-204-958-7710. The opinions expressed in *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate citation. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* can be found on the gopher at <gopher.igc.apc.org> and in searchable hypertext through the *Linkages* WWW-server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/> on the Internet. This volume of the *Bulletin* is uploaded into the APC conferences <enb.library> and <inc.desert>.

predictable financial resources, as well as debt cancellation, in order to reverse this trend. **CAMEROON** said that the provisions of the Convention ensure a strong Secretariat. Cameroon has taken measures regarding the urgent situation in Africa, including holding a seminar to identify strategies and priorities. Cameroon should ratify the Convention at the next session of the National Assembly in June 1995.

URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA AND INTERIM ACTIVITIES IN OTHER REGIONS

INCD Chair **Bo Kjellén** informed delegates that the session was intended to show what has been done in response to the resolution on urgent action for Africa and where partnership arrangements have evolved.

The PHILIPPINES, on behalf of the G-77 and China, said that with regard to urgent action for Africa, the Interim Secretariat should focus on capacity building, training and promotion and elaboration of national, subregional and regional programmes. The IS should also: collate relevant information from affected African countries and make the necessary contacts with UN field agencies, multilateral assistance organizations, local communities, the donor community and NGOs to help implement this resolution. The IS should also raise public awareness.

ALGERIA reported that the members of the Arab Maghreb Union have: developed cooperative relationships with African countries and subregional organizations; begun to work on an inter-Mediterranean framework for the implementation of the Convention; developed their own national action plans; and held a series of meetings on desertification, drought and food security. A Maghreb regional action programme should be finalized soon.

LEBANON stated that it has embarked on a process of reconstruction, including environmental conservation. Thus, he has been authorized to sign the Convention.

TURKEY noted that the classification of countries provided in the Secretariat's documents is not in conformity with the INCD negotiations. Turkey belongs to the Northern Mediterranean region.

FRANCE stated that the European Community will continue to fund desertification activities in Africa, especially in line with the 1989 Lomé IV Convention. France has also begun a consultative process aimed at developing national action programmes and has participated in relevant meetings including those of the Club du Sahel and CILSS/ACCT. France has authorized its missions to be attentive to national requests and will continue to support the OSS.

SENEGAL said that it has established a national sustainable development commission. Action has also been taken at the national level to fully understand the problems of desertification, through the convening of forums and seminars. Ratification of the Convention will be considered by the National Assembly by February 1995. **LESOTHO** reported that a national environment secretariat was established in the office of the Prime Minister in April 1994. Through the coordination of this secretariat, a broadbased committee of NGOs, governmental and other leaders has been formed. A public awareness campaign is underway and seminars for politicians and policymakers on the implementation of this Convention are planned. **NIGER** requested more coordination through the Interim Secretariat.

ISRAEL has held a workshop and seminar relating to plant and land sustainability in dryland areas. Other planned activities include: a seminar on water management; converting a research institute into an international centre for monitoring, research and extension work in desertification; and undertaking a joint project with the Palestinian Authority and Jordan to survey the risks of desertification in the Rift Valley. **ARMENIA** has been raising public awareness about the Convention.

FINLAND has been supporting sustainable agriculture practices, forestry management and training. Planned activities include a scientist assistance programme, with particular emphasis on building forest research capacities of young forestry scientists in developing countries.

The US said that, although the budget climate in Washington is uncertain at the moment, it is still committed to providing US\$500 million in current or planned projects to support the Convention and the urgent action phase. The US has instructed all of its embassies in Africa to support urgent action through dialogue with African governments, donors and international organizations.

GERMANY said that since the signing ceremony in Paris, DM3 million has been given to support the elaboration of national action programmes, coordination and capacity building in Africa. A three-year grant of DM2 million has been given to support the development of a national action plan in Mali and DM5 million is supporting the Namibian Government's elaboration and early implementation of its national action plan.

KENYA stated that a Subcommittee of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Environment, which includes NGOs and academia, has been established to oversee the implementation of the Convention. A similar sub-committee has also been established to ensure linkages between the Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions. In spite of financial constraints, Kenya will provide seed money to the IS to assist in work related to action programmes.

SWITZERLAND decried the fact that some activities being outlined under the resolution on urgent action for Africa were prepared before the completion of the Convention and wondered whether any new funds were required. Switzerland had released SFR1 million for relevant NGO activities. Switzerland should ratify the Convention by the end of this year.

ZAMBIA outlined its activities aimed at developing new programmes on rangeland management, livestock improvement and to uplift the standard of living of the local people. A workshop involving local communities has already been held. **CANADA** reported that it is providing: institutional support to organizations involved in desertification control; capacity building of NGOs; support for agroforestry research; land management projects; and implementation of projects to protect soil restoration. Canada is also supporting NGO anti-desertification and public awareness activities in the Sahel.

UNDP UPDATE

UNDP Administrator **James Gustave Speth** addressed the Committee Wednesday morning. He said that partnerships and compacts at the national level are essential to the successful formulation and implementation of national action programmes. To enable partnership building, a forum must be provided whereby key stakeholders and partners can get together to initiate and maintain an exchange of views on national action programmes and the means to support the Convention. To implement the Convention, UNDP and UNSO's work has been refocused to address the root causes of desertification. UNSO's geographic focus is being broadened to include all affected developing countries. UNEP and UNDP are collaborating on a desertification management facility to provide resources for catalyzing actions and developing a data base to monitor resource flows for desertification control activities.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary will meet at 10:00 am to continue discussion of urgent action for Africa. The first speakers of the morning will be the UK and Japan. The afternoon session will not begin until 4:30 pm, since there is a ceremonial meeting of the G-77 to mark the turnover of the chairmanship from Algeria to the Philippines. During the afternoon, the INCD is expected to discuss the report to the CSD on desertification. Look for the Chair to distribute a preliminary work programme for the second week.

IN THE CORRIDORS: The Chair has been holding consultations on a draft decision on the interim work programme and preparation for the first COP. He held initial consultations on this draft decision in a meeting of the heads of regional and interest groups on Wednesday evening. The draft decision should be circulated by the end of the week.