

Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 4 No. 61 Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Friday, 13 January 1995

INCD HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 12 JANUARY 1995

The INCD spent most of the day listening to reports on implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa and interim action in other regions. The Chair, Bo Kjellén, also distributed a provisional programme of work for next week. The Chair also outlined his report to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA AND INTERIM ACTIVITIES IN OTHER REGIONS

The **UK** is prepared to work with Africans on activities consistent with the Convention and urgent action for Africa. The UK is also preparing a user's guide to the Convention, which is expected to be completed by INCD-7, and is giving further consideration to how to support NGOs. In March, **JAPAN** will send a mission to Senegal to discuss the development of a concrete pilot project that could be adapted for other affected African countries. Japan, in cooperation with Indonesia, some UN agencies and the Global Coalition for Africa, also held the Asia-Africa forum aimed at promoting South-South cooperation.

IFAD said that the lack of awareness about the Convention may be the single-most serious obstacle to its implementation. The preparation of national action programmes (NAPs) cannot be hurried. NAPs must be dynamic, and evolve as experience is gained. The Secretariat should be strengthened, but it should be small, dynamic and versatile. IFAD will assist in resource mobilization and the co-financing of programmes aimed at food security in the drylands. The **OECD** has designated the Club du Sahel as the institution's focal point on the Convention. In February, the CILSS and Club du Sahel will meet with donors to refine their joint programme of work. The implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa is expected to be the subject of its next General Meeting in Canada.

Drawing from its experience, **EGYPT** stated that desertification projects are usually expensive and may need to be implemented at the regional and subregional levels. Egypt hopes that a regional manifesto to combat desertification can be developed.

UZBEKISTAN said that the States in central Asia have set up a council and a fund on the Aral Sea. They are trying to attract international assistance to finance this programme, which includes regional water management, hydro-meteorological monitoring, water quality control, restoration of land productivity, pure drinking water supply, and improving land resources.

The **RUSSIAN FEDERATION** reported that it has signed a treaty with Kazakhstan on the use of jointly-shared water resources.

With the support of UNEP, Russia has started training specialists in the area of space monitoring of desertification. They will hold an international seminar on combating desertification in September.

In implementing the resolution, **MALI** has taken measures to: ensure increased decentralization; develop a new code on collectives and a new law on the taxation of collectives; start the process of ratifying the Convention; and undertake awareness raising campaigns. **BURKINA FASO**'s Minister of Environment and Tourism, Anatole Tiendrebeogo, called attention to Burkina Faso's emergency plan and its national plan of action, distributed by his delegation. In 1994 Burkina Faso drafted a national Agenda 21, held roundtable discussions, and gave priority to drought and desertification ahead of other problems such as unemployment.

GHANA has created a national desertification agency and a national environmental protection plan. Additionally, a committee on drought and desertification with representatives from the government, the scientific community, NGOs and local populations has been set up. Ghana is presently preparing for ratification.

When speaking about urgent action for Africa, **DENMARK** stressed that it is important not to rush implementation, but begin the process by disseminating information. Denmark has started to provide information about the objectives of the Convention to its embassies and is allocating new and additional funds to combat desertification.

KAZAKHSTAN has entered into bilateral treaties with other countries to solve desertification problems and notes with interest the experiences of Israel, which has similar conditions as Kazakhstan. There is also cooperation with UNDP. Regarding urgent action for Africa, it is natural to give priority to Africa, but we need progress in other parts of the world as well.

PORTUGAL is preparing for ratification and is setting up a national committee to implement the Convention. The northern Mediterranean countries are now planning the next steps in implementing their regional annex, including contacts with countries in the Maghreb and the Middle East.

In **BOTSWANA**, a national conservation strategy has been developed, with the help of ministries and NGOs. Botswana is also working on a national action plan and a state of the environment review. For a report on **PAKISTAN**'s activities, see document A/AC.241/30.Add.1. Pakistan has also developed a national plan to combat desertification, with the assistance of UNEP.

SPAIN has: drafted three desertification-related national plans; organized and participated in international conferences and seminars; and is supporting projects in the Canary Islands, Mauritania, Mozambique, Tunisia, Syria, Brazil, Peru, Dominican Republic, Mexico and the Philippines.

BELGIUM reported that although his country had not signed the Convention due to its complex institutional structure, the

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process has been initiated in the five Parliaments to facilitate this process. Belgium is also supporting reforestation programmes in Benin, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.

TUNISIA is undertaking awareness raising campaigns.

In **MAURITANIA**, institutional, technical and awareness related activities have been undertaken, including the creation of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to oversee coordination, the organization of national forums, workshops and research activities, as well as the use of television to raise awareness.

INDIA said that with regard to the sensitivities in the compilation of information on the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa, five aspects should be considered: public awareness campaigns; training; capacity building; technology transfer; and empowerment of people.

BOLIVIA said that reports on urgent action for Africa must be more specific. The Secretariat should compile and analyze this information and list institutions that are already working on desertification and how assistance is being channelled to Africa.

IGADD is reviewing existing institutional arrangements and is making an effort to work with developed countries. The IGADD work programme is focusing on public awareness, prompt ratification, action programmes at the national and subregional levels, and exchange of and access to information.

URUGUAY said that although it is not on the list of countries directly affected by desertification, it does suffer from recurring droughts and variations in rainfall. This must be reflected in UNEP's report to the CSD.

MOROCCO is focusing on reforestation, soil and water conservation, mobilization of water resources, irrigation, dune stabilization and development of pasture areas. Morocco has set up a national committee to combat desertification and has begun to work on its national action programme.

IRAN's desertification control activities include: public awareness; decreasing rural-urban migration through rural development; restoration of degraded lands; and dune stabilization. Iran wishes to share its experiences in combating desertification with African countries.

CILSS asked if the Interim Secretariat could prepare a simplified version of the Convention to facilitate public awareness activities. CILSS is holding consultations aimed at developing a subregional programme of action.

The PHILIPPINES stated that awareness raising should be done within the UN system as well, as he had heard earlier in the day that the UNDP's Executive Board was unaware of the contents of General Assembly resolution 49/234.

GREECE, as one of the affected country Parties, welcomed all interested Mediterranean countries to learn from its experiences. **SUDAN** has undertaken a GIS survey in the affected parts of the country and hosted an IGADD meeting. It has also contacted IGADD regarding funding for scientific research.

Solidarité Canada-Sahel, on behalf of the NGOs, reported that the NGOs have presented their plan of action to the delegates, but noted that the action plan requires funding. He cautioned that some of the activities that governments have reported on may not be in line with the spirit of the Convention.

Executive Secretary **Arba Diallo** expressed satisfaction with the enthusiasm with which delegates have reported on implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa. He noted that the Secretariat does not want to take the place of States and organizations, but in some cases States need support and perhaps the Secretariat could step in and identify the assistance needed.

Kjellén then summarized the discussion, which showed that there is an impressive amount of activity in Africa and other regions. Affected countries have established coordinating bodies and initiated public awareness campaigns and measures to integrate actions to combat desertification within their broader sustainable development plans. Consultations are underway for the preparation

of subregional action programmes. There are significant activities with regard to scientific research and technical assistance. Developed countries have reviewed their development assistance to ensure consistency with the Convention and there are increased efforts towards coordination. Intergovernmental organizations are actively supporting the process. Nevertheless, there is no reason for complacency since the situation in the drylands of Africa continues to be a cause for concern.

REPORT TO THE CSD

The Chair then explained to the delegates that he will be presenting a report to the CSD in April, in addition to the report submitted by UNEP. He proceeded to outline his thoughts on this report and asked delegates for their comments. He noted that this Convention supports Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration, which says people are at the center of development, since the Convention concerns 900 million people and is based on a bottom-up approach and partnerships. He also noted the efforts to improve coordination of international assistance, and the integration and participation of NGOs in the process. Elements of the Convention that fit into the CSD's consideration of other chapters of Agenda 21 include: food security; land use; the use of plant genetic resources; dryland forestry; water resources; and energy. He noted that when the Convention is examined in a broader framework, it has more stature and substance at the global level.

FINLAND noted that the Chair's report also has to draw the linkages between this Convention, and the Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions as well as the Statement on Forest Principles. **BRAZIL** added that the Chair should also include the links to international trade, since obstacles to market access to countries affected by desertification will hinder their efforts to combat desertification. Patterns of production and consumption should also be mentioned. **The PHILIPPINES**, on behalf of the G-77 and China, added that priority should be given to: the prevention of land degradation in vulnerable areas and the containment of degradation where it has already taken place; the fact that desertification and drought are global problems, not local problems; links between land degradation and climate change and biodiversity; and links to the mobilization of financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technologies; and capacity building.

Discussion of this item will resume on Monday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The results of the first part of an informal survey of delegations on ratification proceedings are in. Out of the 36 delegates interviewed on Thursday, eight expect to ratify the Convention within the next four months. Three more think they might ratify the Convention later this year. Eleven delegates said that the necessary documentation is being prepared or has just been submitted to the relevant executive or legislative body for consideration. Three countries will submit the Convention for ratification as soon as it is translated. Nine countries have not begun the ratification process and two delegates did not know what the ratification status was in their countries.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary will meet this morning to discuss the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds (A/AC.241/31). The Plenary will not meet in the afternoon.

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: Regional groups are expected to meet at 3:00 pm. The Chair will meet with the heads of the regional and interest groups at 4:30 pm to continue discussions on the draft decision on the interim programme of work.

UNEP REQUEST: Today is the deadline for delegates to provide UNEP with any factual changes that it should make to its report to the CSD, which was circulated earlier in the week. This report will be going to press on Monday.