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INCD HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 16 JANUARY 1995

The INCD met in Plenary on Monday morning to comment on the report to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and begin discussion on awareness building. The Plenary did not meet in the afternoon to allow time for regional groups to meet, followed by another meeting of the heads of regional and interest groups to continue negotiations on the work programme for the interim period.

The Chair, **Bo Kjellén**, opened the meeting by noting that the meeting of heads of regional and interest groups on Friday came close to a final agreement on the programme of work and distribution of tasks of the two working groups. He added that, given the present situation, INCD-6 may be able to conclude its work on Wednesday evening instead of on Thursday morning.

REPORT TO THE CSD

Bo Kjellén then re-opened discussion on the contents of the INCD's report to the third session of the (CSD). The report will cover how desertification relates to land degradation, Agenda 21 Chapters 10 to 15, as well as other elements of Agenda 21 in which such links can be made.

AUSTRALIA reported that it was halfway through the review of a project known as "Earth Care" that deals with land management issues, in which various interest groups in the country have been involved. He suggested that the study should be cited as one of the case studies to the CSD and a copy of it included as part of an information package. **Kjellén** responded that although he is uncertain about how the CSD meeting will be run, he may be able to fulfill this request within the working group on land management.

PERU sought clarification on whether the INCD document differs from that of UNEP and raised objection to UNEP's proposal that global awareness should be raised in tropical forest areas alone. **Kjellén** explained that UNEP, as task manager on desertification for the CSD, had prepared the document and it is not for the INCD to review. However, UNEP had invited comments from the INCD. He concurred with Peru regarding awareness raising, since Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 also mentions dryland forestry. He concluded that the inputs by UNEP and the INCD to the third session of the CSD will supplement each other.

UNEP noted that all written and verbal comments provided by delegates last week have been included in its report to the CSD. For example, "drought" and the reference to global forests have been changed. The report has now been submitted to the CSD to be printed.

AWARENESS BUILDING

The Chair then invited delegates to discuss public awareness building and to make proposals on what can be done during World Day to Combat Desertification (17 June). He listed some of the main factors that are vital for awareness building: 1) to make the bottom-up approach fully workable where local populations are informed and consulted; 2) to make local authorities aware of the Convention; and 3) to give the Convention equal status to the Biodiversity and Climate Change Conventions.

The **PHILIPPINES**, speaking on behalf of the G-77 and China, stressed that the Secretariat and the Committee should inform others in the UN system about the work to combat desertification. The Secretariat should also work to increase media interest.

INDIA described innovative forms of awareness building that it has undertaken: sharing knowledge between different groups within the country; enabling people to understand that science, technology and their lifestyles can be changed; and establishing education centres to develop school books, among other things.

GHANA noted the lack of awareness on the Convention, even at the governmental level. Simplified materials on the Convention should be generated to cover issues such as a definition of the concepts, as well as what action can be taken, where solutions can be sought, and how preventive measures can be taken, while drawing the necessary attention to any repercussions that could arise.

AUSTRALIA wanted the Committee to consider three questions: what information should be provided; to whom; and by whom. He noted that if the Secretariat assumed a facilitative, rather than an operational, role, it could help other organizations carry out their work and increase cost effectiveness.

The **RUSSIAN FEDERATION** described its work on public awareness, announcing that two international seminars on the Caspian Sea were held in Volgograd and Moscow, the latter supported by UNEP.

FRANCE, on behalf of the EU, stressed that the Convention gives the Secretariat an important role in raising awareness. However, this does not mean that the Secretariat should take the place of local facilities and initiatives.

CHINA thought it essential to guarantee financial resources and mobilize local populations. In China, the Convention has been published in Chinese and a Plan of Action has been drafted. There are plans to publish a brochure, hold an exhibition and convene national conferences with representatives from all levels of society and the media. Resources are needed for all of these activities.

IRAN highlighted the activities that his country had undertaken including: the establishment of 12 centres and three university faculties to address desertification and dune fixation; the

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production and distribution of films, brochures and books around the country; and the establishment of a non-governmental organization, JFI — the Green Front of Iran — comprising over 10,000 university students. He requested the Interim Secretariat (IS) to provide financial support for a JFI representative to attend future INCD sessions.

ALGERIA stated that evidence from the conventions on the ozone layer and biological diversity shows that the IS has an important role to play in information dissemination, through information bulletins and quarterly publications that cover activities initiated in affected developing countries and assistance provided by their partners. The first issue should be available at INCD-7. The IS should mobilize the necessary resources for this and set up an information office. Awareness raising should take place in both developed and developing countries, but in close collaboration with the IS, at three levels: in affected countries; in developed countries, targeting NGOs, parliamentarians and decision-makers; and in the UN system, especially the relevant agencies such as the GEF, UNEP's Governing Board and the CSD. The IS should undertake measures to implement the resolution by the G-77 and China, which was adopted by the 49th General Assembly, to observe World Day to Combat Desertification on 17 June. In honor of this event, the Secretary-General could issue a communiqué or a global meeting of NGOs could be held. A report on this should be presented at INCD-7.

UNEP's Franklin Cardy stated that his agency has had the responsibility of raising awareness on environmental issues. Now that the Convention has been concluded, it is important to raise public awareness. The objectives would be to: 1) raise awareness of desertification worldwide to the level of other global issues, such as climate change; 2) improve the scientific respectability of desertification; and 3) create an information bank. There is also a need to identify the audiences. In order to tackle this range of tasks, a partnership of interested countries and organizations should be built. It could include DPI, TVE, SMI, a publisher, advertising agencies, UNEP, the INCD Secretariat and other UN organizations, donors, and NGOs, especially RIOD, ELCI, ENDA, and large NGOs such as Action Aid and Oxfam. A flexible multi-level partnership is needed with a consistent approach at the global level. UNEP is seeking partners for this purpose.

UZBEKISTAN reported that this is the first Convention in which the new and independent States, such as his, have been involved since the beginning. It is therefore important to consider how the political leaders of such States can be informed about the contents of the Convention. This is why centralized information from the Secretariat is needed. In May, Uzbekistan is planning to hold a conference on the problems of the Aral Sea.

LEBANON has started an intensive media campaign using various forms of visual media and initiated youth projects, including a reforestation campaign.

MOROCCO concurred with Algeria and urged that the distribution of the proposed documentation should coincide with the 17 June ceremony. He called for an integrated approach to awareness campaigns by involving collectives.

MAURITANIA emphasized the lack of awareness about the Convention especially among international agencies that are potential partners. He called for the mobilization of press agencies in the developed countries.

BOLIVIA supported Algeria and the Philippines. He noted the critical role of the IS in raising awareness at the international level and among financial institutions, sub-regional and regional agencies, as well as providing support for national and local initiatives. The IS should present a programme of work on these activities at the next session of the INCD. It is crucial that such information should include the available means of implementation, in order not to create expectations that cannot be met.

MALI noted that the most affected countries lack the means to communicate and suggested the use of decentralized structures. He

supported commemorating World Day to Combat Desertification and proposed that the INCD make recommendations for this.

The GAMBIA outlined activities it has undertaken and is planning. Special task forces have been created to collect and disseminate information through which local communities, NGOs and IGOs can have input. A multi-disciplinary forum is also planned with the twin aims of providing feedback to the decision-makers and implementors on the views of the communities and preparing projects for implementation.

KENYA supported the statements by the Philippines, India, Ghana, Algeria, UNEP and Mauritania. He also supported Algeria's proposal to convene a global forum of NGOs, possibly in Nairobi. NGOs are an important interface between local communities and the government. He also supported the idea of awarding a desertification prize. A cornerstone of public awareness and a precondition for meaningful implementation of this Convention is participation. It should be ensured that local populations know what is being done. A workshop was held on 15-17 August 1994, at which the Government, NGOs and academia participated. The Kenyan Government has also approached UNDP, UNEP and UNSO for assistance in hosting a conference with the stakeholders.

A representative of the NGO community, **Edit Tuboly**, gave examples of NGO public awareness activities. It is important to raise awareness among donor countries, in order to give inspiration to international solidarity, rather than reacting with pity for people in the drylands. The NGO network, RIOD, will help raise public awareness. It is important to get started with fundraising for research, production of desertification kits, capacity-building, workshops and exchanges between Northern and Southern NGOs, and establishing links with other UN conventions.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The Chair convened another meeting of the heads of regional and interest groups on Monday afternoon. The agenda for this meeting included: the programme of work for the interim period; the schedule of meetings for 1996-1997; the schedule for the remaining two days of INCD-6; and "other business". At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair circulated a draft decision on the organization and programme of work for the interim period, which establishes two working groups and sets forth their mandates and the composition of the bureaus (one Chair and two Vice Chairs). The decision also requests the Secretariat to prepare specific documentation for INCD-7 and INCD-8. Outstanding issues at the start of this meeting included: where future meetings of the INCD will be held; who will make up the bureaus of the two working groups; should Working Group I address all of the issues related to finance or should the discussion on the financial rules for the Convention be handled by one working group and the Global Mechanism by another; and what reports should be prepared by the Secretariat. The meeting was expected to last at least until 7:00 pm.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary will convene this morning to finish the discussion on awareness building. The Chair and the Executive Secretary are expected to make their concluding remarks on this item. During the rest of the day, the Plenary is expected to discuss the draft decision on the organization of work for the interim period, which was elaborated during the meeting of the heads of regional and interest groups on Monday evening.

Look for the texts of the Chair's conclusions on the discussions on urgent action for Africa and the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds. These texts, which will be annexed to the report of the session, are supposed to be circulated as CRP documents during the day today.

NGO MEETING: NGOs are invited to meet with representatives of the European Union to discuss implementation

of the Convention from 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm today in Conference Room 2.