



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## INCD HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 8 AUGUST 1995

The INCD Plenary met Tuesday morning to hear introductory statements and then went on to discuss agenda item 3, Urgent action for Africa and interim action in other regions (A/AC.241/40). Discussions continued into the afternoon with activities in Mali and CILSS serving as examples.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

UNEP Executive Director **Elizabeth Dowdeswell** said the INCD has entered a period that requires hard work to achieve real progress towards implementation, generate commitment for action and push for the ratification process. The two challenges are how to resolve the problem of desertification in spite of its complexity and to ensure ratification when donors are cutting back aid. UNEP would be honored to host the Secretariat, but feels it is not the best equipped to become the Global Mechanism. It is better able to contribute to the development of a scientific knowledge base and indicators, push for land degradation to be considered within the main GEF criteria, identify, evaluate and publish success stories in combating desertification and support the Committee on Science and Technology.

UNSO Director **Samuel Nyambi**, on behalf of UNDP Director Gustave Speth, reported that UNSO now supports all affected countries, not only Africa. The organization has changed its name to Office to Combat Desertification and Drought, but retains its acronym. A detailed report of UNSO's activities will be available to delegates. Nyambi said that UNDP is available to host the Global Mechanism.

**Pakistan**, on behalf of the G-77 and China, stated that it views the Global Mechanism as an institution to mobilize resources for the Convention.

### AGENDA ITEM 3 — URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA AND ACTION TAKEN IN OTHER REGIONS

The Chair said he hoped the discussion would permit delegates to learn from African experiences. Amb. Diallo reviewed the Interim Secretariat's role in national and regional activities in Africa. Diallo pointed to a memorandum of understanding between the Interim Secretariat and the CILSS Secretariat. He reviewed the Interim Secretariat's participation in several regional and subregional meetings. Sensitization days have been held in 13 countries with INCD support.

**Central African Republic:** Minister for Environment and Tourism Dede Emery, said the CAR has established a CCD steering committee to accelerate ratification. He appealed for financial and human resource assistance to organize a national seminar on the NAP.

**Burkina Faso:** The Minister of State for Environment and Hydrology, Salif Diallo, highlighted socio-economic factors and the adverse impact of international economic conditions as causes of desertification in Burkina Faso. He expressed perplexity over backsliding of partner support for a NAP, but hoped that resources will be mobilized.

**Eritrea:** Vice-Minister for Agriculture Mehbratu Yassu said Eritrea expects to have ratified the Convention by early 1996. After consulting with local communities using the Eritrea Peoples Forum for the Environment, the NAPs should be complete by year-end.

**Niger** is working on the ratification process. So far, a national NGOs workshop has been held, involving various stakeholders. Other interim activities include: establishment of a national fund to combat desertification; partnership arrangements; awareness raising; and undertaking an in-depth study on the participation of NGOs.

**Egypt** organized a multi-stakeholder awareness building workshop on the CCD in July. Three of the recommendations were to: broaden national awareness; establish a national early warning system; and boost regional and subregional cooperation. With respect to cooperation, UNSO should be strengthened to assist African countries to implement Articles 16, 17 and 18 of the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa.

**Spain**, speaking on behalf of the EU, pointed out that desertification related projects receive a large portion of the total amount of aid allocated by the EU for development projects. The EU funds actions in the Maghreb, Mashrek and Middle East countries and maps the desertification progress by using remote sensing.

**Mexico** stated that it was the first country to ratify the CCD. He assured support to the current process but wondered why urgent actions in Africa take place to the detriment of urgent actions in other regions. There will soon be an announcement of a cooperation project with Iran.

**Kenya** has established a national coordinating body with a national steering committee comprising major stakeholders. Ratification of the CCD is being prepared.

**The Netherlands** said its early ratification of the CCD demonstrates its commitment to the Convention. The country provided one fifth of the initial funding for the CCD and will

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cofinance for three years the NGO network RIOD. She encouraged recipients to approach donors with programs for NAPs and awareness campaigns.

**Tunisia** has developed a charter for the roles of partners. The Minister for Environment will act as a partner in the implementation of the environmental protection programme and NGOs will participate in the development of an action plan and strategy. International efforts are necessary, especially to address poverty and migration problems.

**Syria** has drawn up a national programme to halt desertification. He expects financial assistance to developing countries, including Syria.

**Australia** has identified three guiding principles in its strategy to implement the resolution on Urgent Action for Africa: action taken should be in keeping with the spirit of the Convention; experience and expertise gained in Australia is shared with African countries with similar conditions, thus, focus will be on East and Southern Africa; and emphasis will be on working with established multilateral organizations and NGOs. The Australian Fund for Desertification has been set up and 250,000 dollars will be provided through UNEP and UNSO.

Mustapha Tlili, adviser to **UMA**, explained that the objective is to launch a consultative process and to cooperate with international partners.

**Morocco** said its main measures include setting up a multi-sectoral committee and an agricultural coordination unit. To bring into line various programmes and strategies, a national meeting on drought and desertification was held this year. Its conclusions were that food security, the effective use of water resources and the proper use of natural resources are high priorities.

**France** said Africans must play a major role in choosing projects and priorities, while donors provide support. France can: assist in research; support action plans for CILSS member countries with funding and facilitation for action plans; assist with information, observation and monitoring; and help to mobilize NGOs.

**Switzerland** is supporting actions in India, Pakistan and the Sahel, implementing information and awareness activities and supporting NGOs in various regions. He said it is difficult to see why countries regret the level of donor support, because Switzerland is prepared to adapt its activities to requests. He encouraged demand driven activities.

**Ethiopia** said its national conservation strategy can serve as a guide for its NAP. Ethiopia submitted project proposals to UNDP that would review desertification and natural resource development programmes. Two attempts to establish a demand-driven programme with donors were disappointing.

**Benin** said all that remains is for the new national assembly to authorize ratification of the Convention, possibly before year-end. A televised broadcast has been launched, focusing on the actions and achievements of Benin in combatting desertification.

**Mali** expects to deposit its instrument of ratification with the depositary within a month. The government elaborated on three aspects: its experience in combatting desertification; methodology used to prepare the NAPs; and institutions set up and results achieved. The main problem with previous programmes was lack of community involvement. The three prerequisites for community involvement are: community organization; ensuring technology to be used is understood; and recognizing that communities have the right to negotiate with the State. To preserve a participatory approach, the process will take two years, instead of one. The preparation of the final programme document should be ready by the end of 1996. Three

institutional mechanisms have been set up: the Inter-Ministerial Committee; a multi-stakeholder Consultative Committee; and a Permanent Secretariat. These, with support from NGOs, will oversee the implementation of NAPs and thereby avoid a new bureaucracy. Two NGO representatives outlined their role, which includes coordinating NGO input at the national level and with RIOD. Germany as *Chef-de-fils* in Mali, sees its role as facilitator for the entire donor community. This requires an information strategy and transparency to provide information on the activities and intentions of all partners. A consultation fund is necessary for the preparation of NAPs.

The Executive Secretary of **CILSS**, Mariam Cissé, reported on the activities in the CILSS region, where numerous meetings have been held on a subregional action plan. Partnerships are also being negotiated. At the regional center AGRIMET, a workshop was held to help find priority areas for countries. All six CILSS countries celebrated World Desertification Day. At subregional consultations, information has been shared regarding preparing the NAPs. Prerequisites for partnerships were defined, including: the need for political will; institutional and legal frameworks; full coordination; identification of various parties and organizations; mutual confidence among them; and continuous dissemination of information on all levels. Cissé said that the preliminary draft of the subregional action plan is being prepared. Two CILSS countries have already ratified the CCD. On the scientific side, the Sahel institute conducts research relating to population, produces raw data, and has a satellite receiving station. She finally stated that she hoped for an autonomous Secretariat and that funds should be made available as soon as possible to facilitate immediate action.

The **Club du Sahel** said there is need to find funds and develop solutions. The Club will support a dialogue in November for regional cooperation on peace and sustainable development.

**Mauritania** noted its national day of awareness drew broad participation. Despite the goodwill expressed, there are still real concerns with respect to the availability of funding for the development of NAPs in Africa.

**Canada** is supporting NAPs, research, information systems, and progress indicators. Its awareness raising in Africa and elsewhere includes Solidarité Canada Sahel's campaign in Canada, Canadian NGO activities and seminars for NGOs in three African countries.

**Cape Verde** said it represents a laboratory for the study of all aspects of desertification. Major provisions have been taken to insure that Cape Verde fights desertification.

CILSS Executive Secretary Cissé said she perceived feelings of encouragement but also disappointment over the degree of mobilization and involvement. Recipient countries need to ask partners to respond. The Chair said there is a degree of mobilization of goodwill in the INCD.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** Plenary will meet at noon to hear presentations from IGADD and Namibia. In the afternoon, Plenary will hear presentations on implementation activities in other regions and additional national statements.

**REGIONAL ANNEX DISCUSSIONS:** Groups from regional annexes will meet as follows: from 10:00-11:00 am, Latin America in room 3 and Northern Mediterranean in room 4; from 11:00-12:00 Africa in room 3 and Asia in room 1.

**SCIENCE DISCUSSION:** Canada will host a discussion of science issues in room 4 at 2:00 pm.