



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 4 No. 69 Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Thursday, 10 August 1995

INCD HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 9 AUGUST 1995

The morning was taken up by regional meetings. Plenary resumed briefly at 12:30 pm and again in the afternoon to hear reports from the regional groups on interim action taken in the Asian, Northern Mediterranean and Latin American regions, after which additional reports were given on the Urgent action for Africa.

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

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR THE LATIN AMERICAN REGION

Colombia, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, said in view of the growing serious problem of desertification in the region, there is need to establish urgent action there. During this session, we have seen a trend to focus on one single region to the detriment of others. A workshop is planned for 28 August to 3 September 1995 to discuss and examine the implementation of the regional annex. He hoped there will be an indication of support for the upcoming conference to guarantee the international nature of the CCD.

Bolivia concurred with Colombia on the need to bear in mind other regions within the concept of universality of the CCD. Some aspects of Bolivia's NAPs are: an integrative approach covering environmental, physical and socio-economic aspects; utilization of a participatory, regional and subregional approach; and support from the international community, mainly the INCD, FAO and UNEP. Ratification is expected by the end of August 1995.

Brazil's desertification programmes include: a training and qualification course on combating desertification; setting up of an information and documentation network involving five institutions; agro-economic zoning; development of water storage technologies and high-yield crops for arid lands.

Peru has had a national committee and basic national plan against desertification for about two years. He noted the difficulties in achieving full participation at the grassroots level because only those who have and can process information can participate. He highlighted the work of Peruvian NGOs and plans for national and regional meetings.

Mexico supported the need to convene a meeting to assess regional progress related to action plans already underway. Addressing desertification cannot be a global panacea but must have a regional view.

Chile said that challenges in education, promotion, and development of actions against desertification require funding and the establishment of programmes and policies. **Cuba** said its programmes could continue in 1996 if the necessary support is available. A ministerial environmental meeting scheduled for September in Havana will provide an opportunity to insert language supporting CCD activities in the conference document.

Argentina is finalizing a new national plan to build on one it began implementing five years ago. Governmental level actions to combat desertification have been decentralized with eight of 14 affected provinces developing water and land conservation laws, and four setting up provincial land and water conservation authorities.

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR ASIA

India, reporting from the mornings regional meeting on Asia, said that a concept paper prepared by India during INCD-6 in New York had been discussed. The conclusion was that a more action-oriented approach was needed. He hoped that such a paper could be presented at INCD-8. The Asian group will hold expert meetings before the next INCD.

China mentioned several activities related to desertification: the establishment of a national training center; the holding of two seminars involving local governments; measures to create awareness of the CCD; completion of the field work for a national survey of desertification; the celebration of World Day to Combat Desertification; and the establishment of bilateral cooperation.

The Russian Federation stressed that the process of desertification has now spread to Europe and Russia to become an international problem. She pleaded for international support to combat the unprecedented difficulties in the Federation.

Korea said desertification is not a purely African problem. Central and Southeast Asia are also affected, so Korea is committed to implementation and the INCD.

Uzbekistan said its regional objectives are improved water and water quality management, a united information base, Aral Sea research, addressing drinking water and health problems, a plan for reservoirs and water distribution. Although donor countries have been identified, only partial funding is available.

Kazakhstan lacks abundant water resources, so land suffers, especially pasture land. Sixty percent is affected. Financial need prevents full programme implementation to fight desertification. Small projects are underway in the Aral region on phytoirrigation, rehabilitation of pasture land and other subjects.

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@econet.apc.org> is written and edited by Elisabeth Corell <elico@tema.liu.se>, Wagaki Mwangi <econews@mukla.sasa.unep.no> and Steve Wise <swise@econet.apc.org>. French translation by Mongi Gadhoun <gad@tunisia.eu.net>. The managing editor is Langston James Goree VI "Kimo" <kimo@pipeline.com>. The sustaining donors of the *Bulletin* are the International Institute for Sustainable Development <iisd@web.apc.org>, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Pew Charitable Trusts through the Pew Global Stewardship Initiative. General support for the *Bulletin* for 1995 is provided by the United Kingdom, Switzerland, GTZ, and the World Bank. Partial funding for this volume of the *Bulletin* has been provided by the United States Department of Agriculture and by ACCT for the French translation. During the session the authors can be contacted at tel: (254) 2 211199 and fax: (254) 2 217120. IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada; tel: +1-204-958-7700; fax: +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* are automatically sent to e-mail distribution lists (ASCII and PDF format) and 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.

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

Turkey said the Almería conference of June 26-28 established a dialog toward the coordination of NAPs. He said all regional annex groups should be represented in the Bureau. Governments should designate a focal point for implementation of NAPs. A regional information network should be established.

Israel said its experts had conducted seminars and extension work in African countries. An international center for combating desertification is being established with a mission to look at regional and global issues. He described a Middle East joint subregional project with Jordan and the Palestinian autonomous region to seek development options without the risk of desertification. The subregion does not suffer from desertification, but potential pressure is high. Now is the right time for a mitigation programme.

Iran reported that after its last session, ESCAP supported the strengthening of the Asian regional network on training and research in desertification and provided funds for its office in Tehran. ESCAP has also requested the convening of a high-level meeting to develop a regional programme of action for the network. **Armenia** outlined the extent and causes of desertification in the country. Armenia expects to ratify the CCD by year-end. All the necessary prerequisites to develop an action plan exist, but there are financial constraints. Support from international organizations is needed. **Lebanon** is likely to ratify the Convention by October. A predominantly governmental national committee has been set up to: raise awareness on the CCD; plan for activities to slow the process of desertification; and work out reforestation processes.

A Turkish NGO, **TEMA**, said NGOs have been active in raising awareness on the CCD. An awareness raising meeting was held in October 1994 and another one is planned for after INCD-7.

RESOLUTION ON URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA

Uganda, on behalf of Africa, welcomed the priority accorded the region and assistance provided so far. There is still need to: raise awareness on the social, economic and ecological conditions in countries; resolve financial and human resource constraints; provide enabling funds to communities to encourage them to implement the NAPs; and establish or strengthen structures or institutions that promote capacity building. The focus on Africa does not take away the global nature of the Convention. Uganda had held two national workshops in July to sensitize the public on the objective of the CCD and the public's role during the interim and post-ratification periods. The government has set aside enabling funds to be given directly to communities, within the context of combating desertification, mitigating drought and alleviating poverty. Uganda is in the process of ratifying the Convention.

Kenya, on behalf of the seven-member IGADD subregion, said the region has held two meetings since 1994. A meeting in Eritrea 1-3 August 1995 made several recommendations including: inviting donors to develop their own consultative processes for collaboration with IGADD; the setting up of a multi-disciplinary scientific and technical committee and sub-regional consultative process, and a governmental steering committee to address partnership arrangements; and the development of a work plan and timelines for the preparation and implementation of the SRAPs.

Mary Seely of Desert Research Foundation of **Namibia** presented Namibia's Programme to Combat Desertification (NAPCOD). NAPCOD includes advisors from the ministries of environment and agriculture and an NGO. Its objectives are to: identify key players; establish mechanisms for information collection; develop integrated planning and strategies at all levels; elaborate interdisciplinary research programmes; provide training and education; empower natural resource users; define conditions, incentives and decision-making affecting sustainable

resource management; and establish an organizational management. NAPCOD's first phase, during 1994, included a national workshop, a media campaign, and rural and urban networking. Phase two will carry on for four years, but it is an open project, as desertification problems cannot be solved in such a short time. Namibia has not looked at drawing up a specific NAP. **SADC** has established a network to discuss the NAPs and SRAPs and to address the question of ratification of the CCD. The Committee of Ministers meeting in hopes to have ratified the CCD by 1997.

Sweden has supported 30 projects related to desertification during the last ten years. The main thrust has been on higher education and applied research. In consultation with IGADD, four current thematic projects have been developed on pastoralism, dryland husbandry, biodiversity and soil and water.

Mali answered Mauritania's questions from Tuesday by explaining that the national forum is made up of all types of participants from government and NGOs, to local opinion leaders. The representatives were selected by their own organs. Expertise will be chosen on the basis of skills, so if experts are not found in Mali, they will look elsewhere. They have begun the process of identifying the stakeholders. The forum could therefore be the opportunity to sign the partnership contract, and the process could continue after the forum. Concerning dealing with uninhabited desert areas, Mali should encourage people to settle in these areas.

Senegal has established a national fund and is working toward a revised forest code and regional autonomy for local communities. A national strategy for environmental communication included awareness raising on June 17, a planned forum on environmental management in rural areas, workshops for a national brush fire strategy and other human zone degradation strategies. He cited an enormous effort by NGOs and others to disseminate information.

The **Organization of African Unity** noted two OAU resolutions to encourage African participation in INCD. National and regional funds are an issue at various levels. The location of the Permanent Secretariat should serve the continent's best interests, since Africa is most affected by desertification.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Early discussions of the demand-driven approach to combating desertification appear to reveal some discrepancy between the rhetoric and reality of the bottom-up philosophy widely touted as one of the CCD's most innovative provisions. Most delegates agree that the approach is a key to CCD's success, but many also seem to be dissatisfied with the practical level of partnership achieved in the first efforts related to urgent action for Africa. Developing country delegates have expressed disappointment and concern over the response by donors. They feel that field offices of aid agencies do not seem clearly committed to the funding responsibilities supported by politicians during INCD sessions. Donors say they are willing to respond but have not yet received clear proposals to apply resources for interim activities. This problem may be rooted in the differing perceptions of the proper focus of donor support and the fact that some OECD countries have new administrations. Both groups agree that improved communication and understanding will be required to resolve the differences and meet the CCD's objectives.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP I meets this morning at 10:00 am to begin discussions of the Global Mechanism. In the afternoon, the group will take up designation of a Permanent Secretariat.

WORKING GROUP II begins discussion on the rules of procedure for the COP at 10:00 am and in the afternoon will discuss the Committee on Science and Technology.

Look for a revised agenda for next week's session.