



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## INCD-9 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 1996

Delegates to INCD-9 met in Plenary during the morning and afternoon to hear approximately forty statements from countries and regional organizations regarding urgent action for Africa. A contact group met during the evening to discuss one function of the Global Mechanism.

### PLENARY

INCD Chair Bo Kjellén opened the Plenary and noted that no formal decision would result from the day's deliberations, but a Chair's summary could be included as an annex to the report of the session. The US returned to the issue of NGO accreditation and stated that it fully supported the list of NGOs.

**URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA:** MALI reported on forums that: created awareness of the National Action Programme (NAP); identified specific problems and the strengths and weaknesses of the present system; and strengthened local capacities. A national fund to combat desertification has been created. CHINA hosted the Asian-African forum on combatting desertification. In addition to South-South bilateral cooperation, triangular cooperation with a developed country was discussed.

Ireland, on behalf of the EUROPEAN UNION, said that responsibility for commitments to combat desertification lie with national governments. SENEGAL has: established a national coordinating body; created a new forest code that involves empowerment and decentralization; and organized a week of activities and seminars on desertification. NIGER's ratification of the CCD demonstrates its political will and commitment to combat desertification. It has established a national council for sustainable development.

GERMANY has a special fund of \$1.3 million to support enabling activities in Africa, and will replenish the fund in 1997. She said representatives of donor countries should sensitize themselves to the implications and contents of the CCD. GHANA has decentralized its decision making process to allow the local level to take decisions and has established a national level coordinating committee. A national desertification unit has been established and is engaged in awareness creation. MALAWI stated there is a lack of awareness at all levels regarding necessary policy

and legal instruments, and even less is known about the CCD. Workshops have been planned and the media and NGOs are involved in awareness raising activities.

SWAZILAND has held a number of workshops on the national and regional levels and is working to develop a NAP. The GAMBIA has held meetings with an average of 150 participants in its 16 agro-ecological zones to address the national action plans related to the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Desertification Conventions. ERITREA stressed that, since desertification is its most serious environmental problem, there is need to address the question of land tenure and support sustainable land use. He outlined an extensive seedling planting program, and also invited donors to become partners in development.

ETHIOPIA reported on two workshops: one to familiarize relevant government agencies with the CCD and one to bring together a wide spectrum of stakeholders. Dissemination of information is carried out by the media, including on radio and in newspapers. NAMIBIA discussed activities under the national programme, including media workshops, meetings with development partners, a review of policy issues on desertification, and updates to the National Assembly on CCD issues. DJIBOUTI noted efforts to finalize the ratification process.

BENIN has sponsored a number of awareness raising activities on the regional, national and local levels and worked out a time table for development of the NAP. PORTUGAL is working on its NAP and held an experts meeting on the rehabilitation of degraded forest ecosystems in Lisbon in June 1996. EGYPT is working on its NAP, which will contain: supporting measures; monitoring and assessment measures; and management and physical implementation of projects. He looked forward to the ratifications of the CCD by the US, Japan, France and the UK.

ALGERIA has included references to desertification in its legislation on forests and environment. He stressed the costs involved in preventing desertification and asked developing countries to consider debt alleviation to improve the situation in countries like his. Lesotho, on behalf of the SADC countries, noted that the Southern African regional programme seeks to strengthen institutions and regional early warning systems, and to promote cooperation in sustainable management of natural resources and development of appropriate technology.

TUNISIA announced it has established an international centre

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for environment and technology, to undertake various activities including the promotion of the transfer, acquisition and adaptation of new technologies on environmental issues, including on desertification, in response to Article 19. MOROCCO described several initiatives it has begun in the environmental arena, including the establishment of an environmental ministry in 1995 and the initiation of the process to ratify the CCD. FRANCE noted that scientific and local knowledge is rarely used in the field. It will create an international programme to deal with some desertification issues. France is also willing to organize a seminar in Africa to consider how foundations, such as the GEF, can be mobilized to address desertification.

JAPAN stated it has found that rural agricultural projects should be suited to local characteristics. The Japan Fund for Global Environment has been created to fund NGO activities. The NETHERLANDS announced it will accept Burkina Faso's request to serve as Chef-de-file in Burkina Faso. AUSTRALIA is sharing technology and expertise developed to deal with its own drylands with Asian and African countries. Information on the draft National Strategy for managing Australia's rangelands is available from <rangelands@dest.gov.au>.

SUDAN outlined activities undertaken to harmonize the national development plan and the Convention, noting that most CCD-related activities initiated by the government have not been given support by donors. SWITZERLAND identified areas they will be funding. He appealed to affected country delegates to provide reports on how they are promoting participation of those affected by CCD implementation. MADAGASCAR provided details of the four stages they are undertaking in the preparation of the NAP and said their instrument of ratification will be submitted soon.

FINLAND stressed the importance of linking forestry and desertification issues. Finland recently hosted a methodological seminar on indicators and noted that more work needs to be done to develop reliable indicators. The CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC has organized days for consciousness raising. A pilot committee has been developed with a Secretariat and a media specialist. MAURITANIA will put in place a national fund for desertification and a legal framework, and has organized a national awareness creating day.

CANADA talked about its initiatives in Africa, Latin America and Asia and has supported international as well as national NGOs. Awareness has also been raised in Canada under the principle "think globally, act locally." South Africa described the work of the VALDIVIA GROUP, a group of temperate southern hemisphere countries for technical and scientific cooperation. At INCD-8 an initiative was launched for cooperation between NGOs and governments for exchange of expertise. SOUTH AFRICA hopes to ratify the CCD as soon as possible. The EUROPEAN COMMISSION has started a review of EU countries' activities on desertification, which will include an assessment of progress made. An informal task force will produce recommendations and guidelines for the implementation of the CCD.

CILSS has supported member states' efforts to develop their national action programmes and to develop a west African regional action programme. A simplified version of the Convention has been distributed in rural areas, and is being translated into many of the region's languages. CILSS has also initiated a study for a regional facilitation fund. Kenya, on behalf of IGAD, said IGAD has been restructured and now includes an office for humanitarian affairs. The Convention has been translated into Swahili and will be translated into many other languages of the subregion. The FAO: will cooperate with the Italian government to host COP-1 in Rome; welcomes IFAD's proposal to host the GM; and noted that the

upcoming World Food Summit is the first meeting organized around the theme of world food supply.

In its work on the Convention, UNDP/UNSO has identified three problems in the preparation of the action programmes: the national coordinating bodies may not always have the authority or credibility to bring together all the actors; not everyone views NAPs as participatory and iterative processes; and many of the initiatives on NAPs still lack financial support. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) highlighted regional and subregional meetings it has been involved in related to the CCD. He added that the OAU is torn between the need for inter-African cooperation to ensure sustainable development and coping with issues of peace and democracy, including conflict resolution and natural disaster control.

In his concluding remarks, the Chair said the Executive Secretary would provide a closing statement on Urgent Action for Africa Thursday afternoon. After presentations from the other regions, delegates may discuss three questions: what the major constraints and actions have been in launching these actions; what the reaction of people has been regarding the Convention; and delegates' views on cooperation between the governments and NGOs.

### **INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS**

The informal meeting scheduled for Wednesday evening to address the outstanding issues on the Global Mechanism, financial rules and the administrative arrangements for the Permanent Secretariat took five minutes. The Chair announced that some delegates, who are key negotiators and who need to be in the informal group, are also participating in an open-ended contact group that was formed to find a solution to the still unresolved fourth function of the Global Mechanism (promoting actions leading to the mobilization of financial resources). Consequently, he said, the informal working group would not meet. He hoped that all outstanding issues would be resolved in Working Group I Thursday morning. The contact group proceeded with its meeting.

### **RATIFICATION UPDATE**

Gabon and Botswana became the most recent countries to complete the CCD ratification process, bringing the total number of ratifications to 45.

## **THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**PLENARY:** The Plenary will meet in Conference Room 2 at 3:00 pm to consider the situation in Asia, Latin America and the Northern Mediterranean.

**WORKING GROUP I:** The Working Group is expected to meet all morning in Conference Room 1 to complete negotiations on the outstanding issues on the Global Mechanism, administrative arrangements for the Permanent Secretariat and the financial rules, and to adopt the report of the Group. Look for the Chair's draft decision on the Global Mechanism, which was circulated Wednesday morning.

**WORKING GROUP II:** The Working Group is expected to meet in Conference Room 2 at 10:00 am to consider draft resolutions regarding: work on benchmarks and indicators to measure progress in implementation; organization of scientific and technological cooperation; the programme of work for the Committee on Science and Technology; and procedures for communication of information and review of implementation.

**FRANCOPHONE CONSULTATION:** The Francophone group will meet from 1:30 to 2:30 in Conference Room 3.