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SUMMARY OF THE NINTH SESSION OF THE INC FOR THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 3-13 SEPTEMBER 1996

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention to Combat Desertification (INCD) met for its ninth session at UN Headquarters in New York, from 3-13 September 1996. The INCD is currently functioning during the interim period between the conclusion of the Convention and its entry into force, and is preparing for the first Conference of the Parties (COP-1).

During the session, delegates reviewed the status of ratification, the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds, and the implementation of the resolution on Urgent Action for Africa, as well as interim measures in other regions. The working groups continued to prepare for COP-1, which is expected to be held in September or October 1997. In the working groups, delegates addressed outstanding issues related to arrangements regarding the Global Mechanism, the designation of a Permanent Secretariat, scientific and technical cooperation, rules of procedure, financial rules, and communication of information. Delegates' general impression was that good progress was made, especially concerning scientific and technological cooperation, even though several of the most important, primarily financial, issues remain unresolved.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INCD

Desertification affects about one-sixth of the world's population, 70 percent of all drylands and one-quarter of the total land area in the world. The most obvious impacts of desertification are: poverty; the degradation of 3.3 billion hectares of the total area of rangeland; a decline in soil fertility and soil structure; and the degradation of irrigated cropland.

The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) was formally adopted on 17 June 1994, and opened for signature at a ceremony in Paris on 14-15 October 1994. The Convention takes an innovative approach in recognizing: the physical, biological and socioeconomic aspects of desertification; the importance of

redirecting technology transfer so that it is demand driven; and the involvement of local populations in the development of national action programmes. The core is the national and subregional/ regional action programmes, to be developed by national governments in cooperation with donors, local populations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To date, the Convention has 115 signatories and has been ratified by 47 countries. It will enter into force 90 days after receipt of the 50th ratification.

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION

During its 47th session in 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), adopted resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of the INCD. At the organizational session of the INCD in January 1993, delegates elected Bo Kjellén (Sweden)

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Chair of the Committee. The first session was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24 May to 3 June 1993. The first week focused on sharing technical information and assessments, and the second week dealt with the structure, elements and objectives of the Convention.

The second session of the INCD met in Geneva from 13-24 September 1993. The Committee considered the compilation text of the CCD and agreed on the future programme of work, including the elaboration of regional instruments for Africa, Asia and Latin America. The third session of the INCD was held at UN Headquarters in New York from 17-28 January 1994. The two working groups focused on the draft negotiating text of the Convention. The INCD also discussed the regional instrument for Africa.

At the fourth session, which took place in Geneva from 21-31 March 1994, negotiations of the draft Convention continued and delegates also formally considered the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa. The Asian and Latin American regional groups produced their own draft regional implementation annexes. When the fifth session of the INCD met in Paris from 6-17 June 1994, delegates worked through the remaining bracketed text in the Convention and finalized four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. The Convention was adopted on 17 June 1994, along with resolutions recommending urgent action for Africa and interim arrangements for the period between adoption of the CCD and its entry into force. The Convention was opened for signature at a ceremony in Paris from 14-15 October 1994.

POST-AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS

The sixth session of the INCD was held in New York from 9-18 January 1995. The Committee reached agreement on its work programme for the interim period and the mandates of the two working groups and plenary.

Delegates at the seventh session, which took place in Nairobi from 7-17 August 1995, reviewed the status of ratification and implementation of the Resolution on Urgent Action for Africa and Interim Measures. The Committee discussed and provided input on the structure and elements that should be considered in preparation for COP-1.

The eighth session, held from 5-15 February 1996 in Geneva, reviewed the status of ratifications and the implementation of the Resolution on Urgent Action for Africa and Interim Measures. The Committee also discussed and began negotiations on some of the Secretariat's texts on the preparations for COP-1. Delegates requested the Secretariat to prepare new text for negotiation at INCD-9, based on their discussions on the Committee on Science and Technology, communication and information, draft rules of procedure for the COP, draft financial rules, the Global Mechanism and arrangements to house the Permanent Secretariat and, for INCD-10, programme and budget. Some delegations revisited the question raised at INCD-7 on whether there was a need for two-week sessions of the Committee in the future.

REPORT OF THE NINTH SESSION

Tuesday, 3 September 1996, marked the beginning of the ninth session of the Committee. The purpose of this nine-day session was to continue preparations for the first Conference of the Parties, which is tentatively scheduled to take place in late 1997. During the session additional NGOs were accredited (A/AC.241/9/Add.12) and three Bureau members were added to replace members who were unable to attend the INCD. Anatolii Ovchinnikov (Uzbekistan) was appointed Rapporteur of the Committee, Alock

Jain (India) was elected to the Bureau, and Samvel Baloyan (Armenia) was elected Vice-Chair of Working Group II. A panel on women and desertification was held during the second week of the session, with presentations from NGOs regarding women and access to credit, land tenure and awareness raising.

OPENING PLENARY

INCD Chair Bo Kjellén (Sweden) introduced the agenda and programme of work, as contained in document A/AC.241/53, and proposed a re-organization of the work for the first Plenary. His changes and the agenda were adopted. In his opening statement, Kjellén announced that 41 ratifications have been received and, thus, the goal to have COP-1 by September 1997 is within reach. He hoped that during the World Solar and Food Summits and the 1997 Special Session of the General Assembly, the link between the CCD and energy, food security and poverty alleviation, and water resources, respectively, would be recognized. The Chair stated that although the Global Mechanism (GM) is the most difficult and complicated issue, discussions at the last CSD regarding innovative fundraising mechanisms illustrated that the idea of a GM is timely. Delegates then heard several statements from national ministers, representatives of regional groups and heads of UN agencies.

Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, noted that CCD is one of the first conventions to encompass the integrated approach of *Agenda 21*. He noted the prospect of 50 ratifications by the fifth anniversary of UNCED.

MONGOLIA said the country's new democratic government is willing to take serious steps to ensure the maintenance of an ecological balance. HONDURAS, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, stated that the Convention is promising, but is a package of dreams. His country supports CCD and hopes to ratify it this year.

MEXICO noted that his was the first country to sign and ratify the CCD. He provided the results of a regional meeting, including the establishment of a regional coordinating unit in the Convention Secretariat at UNEP that will receive financial support from Mexico. The CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC outlined various initiatives it has undertaken to combat desertification, including raising awareness among parliamentarians.

UNEP Executive Director Elizabeth Dowdeswell expressed UNEP's interest in hosting the Permanent Secretariat and outlined UNEP's past activities, history and role that render it suitable. She said UNEP is willing to support the work of the Committee on Science and Technology and to collaborate with the institution that hosts the GM.

UNDP considers the CCD one of the most significant post-Rio frameworks for operationalizing the goals of sustainable development. Availability and access to data on resource mechanisms is critical to implementation. He noted UNDP's efforts to support the objectives of the CCD, including a trust fund to combat desertification and drought. He reconfirmed UNDP's availability to host the GM.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) reported on a forum on action plans held in June, where participants recognized the possibility of accelerating learning programmes and the desirability of including rural area development on the Committee on Science and Technology. The GM must go beyond a clearinghouse role and should harness resources not currently available for the drylands. IFAD is willing to host the GM and could provide a detailed proposal at INCD-10.

CANADA outlined its four priority areas for development assistance, including the environment. Ireland, on behalf of the EUROPEAN UNION (EU), emphasized the urgent need to determine the functions of the GM because this determines how COP-1 selects the institution to house the GM. CHAD outlined steps taken towards the implementation of the CCD, including the setting up of a high-level committee.

The Executive Secretary of the Committee, Hama Arba Diallo, noted the Italian Government's offer to host COP-1. He also highlighted activities that have been carried out recently, including efforts in African countries and regional meetings. ITALY confirmed its offer to host COP-1 in Rome.

URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA AND ACTION TAKEN IN OTHER REGIONS

The discussion on the resolution on urgent action for Africa and interim measures was originally intended to be conducted during two Plenaries. Three full meetings plus part of a fourth were necessary to accommodate the large number of speakers. Nevertheless, this was still half the time it has taken to discuss the same subject at past sessions. Country delegates and representatives from international organizations discussed, in turn, actions taken since INCD-8 in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Northern Mediterranean region. With a few exceptions, speakers observed the five-minute time limit given, which enabled over 60 delegates to make presentations. Several delegates circulated supplementary information on their activities. INCD Chair Bo Kjellén noted that no formal decision would result from the deliberations, but a Chair's summary would be included as an annex to the report of the session.

URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA: African countries focused on national activities. Madagascar, South Africa, Morocco and Djibouti reported on their progress in ratifying the CCD. Mali, Ghana, Mauritania and Senegal are putting in place structures to facilitate participation of affected populations in decision-making. National awareness raising, including using media, workshops and meetings, is taking place in Malawi, Swaziland, the Gambia, Ethiopia, Namibia, Benin and the Central African Republic. Others, including Niger, Eritrea, Egypt, Algeria and Sudan reported on policy changes in specific sectors, which would enhance the process of combating desertification and preparation of national action plans (NAPs).

Tunisia announced that in response to Article 19 of the CCD, it has established an international centre for environment and technology to undertake various activities such as promoting the transfer, acquisition and adaptation of new technologies. Egypt looks forward to the ratification of the CCD by the US, Japan, France and the UK. China reported on the August Asia-Africa forum where triangular cooperation (cooperation between a developed country and South-South partners) and South-South cooperation were discussed.

Donor countries reported on their financial or technical contributions. Germany has a special fund of US\$1.3 million to support enabling activities in Africa, which it will replenish in 1997. The Japan Fund for Global Environment has been created to fund NGO activities. Switzerland outlined several areas it will be funding and appealed to affected countries to provide reports on how they are promoting participation of affected populations. Australia and France reported on technical input they will make in CCD implementation. Finland highlighted its contribution to the work on indicators, while Canada elaborated on its work in developing countries.

Regional groups and intergovernmental agencies also contributed to the discussion. The Organization of African Unity

(OAU) highlighted regional and subregional meetings it has been involved in. The OAU is torn between the need for inter-African cooperation to ensure sustainable development and the need to cope with issues of peace and democracy, including conflict resolution and natural disaster control. Lesotho, on behalf of the SADC countries, noted that their regional programme seeks to strengthen institutions and regional early warning systems, promote cooperation in the sustainable management of natural resources and develop appropriate technology. Kenya, on behalf of IGADD, said IGADD 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. South Africa, on behalf of the Valdivia Group (a group of temperate southern hemisphere countries), reported on an initiative to exchange expertise between NGOs and governments that was launched at INCD-8.

Ireland, on behalf of the European Union, said that responsibility for commitments to combat desertification lies with national governments. The European Commission is reviewing the EU countries' activities on desertification, and is assessing what progress has been made. An informal task force will produce recommendations and guidelines for the implementation of the CCD.

In its work on the Convention, UNDP/UNSO has identified three problems in the preparation of action programmes: national coordinating bodies often lack the authority or credibility to bring together all the actors; not everyone views NAPs as a participatory and iterative processes; and many of the NAP initiatives still lack financial support. The FAO said it will cooperate with the Italian Government to host COP-1 in Rome and welcomed IFAD's proposal to host the GM.

INTERIM MEASURES IN ASIA: Thirteen delegates from Asia spoke on interim measures in Asia. Several noted national characteristics that contributed to desertification, such as the landmines and damaged bridges in Afghanistan that reduce the amount of rangeland used for grazing.

One of the speakers to identify national initiatives was China, which has enhanced the role of governmental organizations in coordinating policies related to drought. China is also training local policy makers to better understand CCD-related policies. In an NGO statement, Ms. Niu Yuqin from the China Desert Reclamation Association said she has been combating desertification in her village. Armenia has introduced bills on environmental, vegetation and wildlife protection to create a system to protect natural resources. Bangladesh has introduced environmental education into the educational curriculum. Yemen is helping local sectors and NGOs take part in the struggle against desertification. Israel announced that negotiations with Germany are expected to conclude soon, resulting in a new academic programme offering an advanced degree in desert sciences. Myanmar is planning an awareness raising seminar.

Cooperative efforts in the region were also noted. Iran said the Asian regional network, DESCONAP, can be the main mechanism through which the regional Annex can be implemented. Russia hopes to bring together the administrative heads of the countries in the region to develop a plan of action to combat desertification. India reported on the regional meeting held in August in India. Jordan noted joint initiatives with several Middle Eastern countries.

Several countries noted the need for resources, including Nepal, who expressed hope that the GM would mobilize substantial resources and that the least developed countries would receive special attention. Executive Secretary Diallo noted that the bulk of bilateral funding for activities in Asia has come from Switzerland, Japan and the Netherlands.

INTERIM MEASURES IN LATIN AMERICA: Seven delegates spoke on the subject of interim measures in Latin America. National efforts include: creating an advisory body to elaborate the national programme and special programmes for territories in affected areas (Cuba); establishing a national information network (Brazil); including NGOs as much as possible in decision-making on drylands problems (Peru); holding awareness days involving the media and local communities (Bolivia); and sponsoring a national reforestation programme (Mexico).

Cooperative efforts in Latin America include efforts by Chile to initiate regional cooperation on research, and by Brazil and Mexico to assist Haiti in combating desertification. Brazil discussed the regional development of indicators and benchmarks.

Colombia emphasized the socio-economic aspects of desertification. UNDP discussed UNDP/UNSO activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, and reaffirmed UNDP's commitment to implement the CCD in close cooperation with other UN agencies.

INTERIM MEASURES IN THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN: Spain spoke on behalf of the Annex IV Countries (Northern Mediterranean), and elaborated on their cooperation. A regional reflection group was created, national focal points were identified, and contacts between organizations were established. Spain emphasized its own commitment to the CCD process through participation in regional meetings and funding activities in Latin America and Africa. Turkey has organized a symposium on combating erosion and desertification.

NGO ACTIVITIES: Masse Lo, on behalf of the international NGO network RIOD, presented NGO activities in CCD implementation in all regions. He stated that institutional problems in some countries have been encountered and that the machinery is being established to strengthen NGOs' relationship with some subregional organizations.

STATUS OF SIGNATURE AND RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION

Ratifications were received from six countries during the two-week session in New York (Mongolia, Central African Republic, Gabon, Botswana, Haiti and Zambia), bringing the total number to forty-seven. The Convention will enter into force 90 days after fifty countries have ratified it. A number of delegates noted that the ratification process had begun in their country and many anticipated that it would be completed before the end of the year. The countries that had ratified or acceded to the Convention previously, in chronological order, are: Mexico, Cape Verde, the Netherlands, Egypt, Senegal, Ecuador, Lesotho, Finland, Togo, Tunisia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Peru, Sudan, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Niger, Mauritius, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Spain, Micronesia, Israel, Portugal, Panama, Lebanon, Algeria, the Gambia, Malawi, Germany, Libya, Oman, Bolivia, Mauritania, Eritrea, Benin and Norway.

REVIEW OF THE SITUATION AS REGARDS EXTRABUDGETARY FUNDS

Executive Secretary Diallo reviewed the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds, as contained in documents A/AC.241/59 and Add.1. He outlined the various expenditures, including activities funded over the last biennium, and details of the developing countries funded to participate at INCD-9. He also provided a breakdown of donor country contributions since the INCD began and presented the Secretariat's staffing situation. He said that although the financial report indicated the amounts up to 31 May (when the UN financial year end), the addendum outlines the funds that have been sent to the UN since then for use by the INCD.

Greece, on behalf of the OECD group of countries and supported by Germany and Australia, commended the quality of the Report. The OECD group of countries also requested the Secretariat to submit a work plan for each biennium and sought clarification on whether the fellowships and grants indicated in the trust funds are recurrent expenditures.

The Netherlands announced that it had committed itself to provide one million guilders, but it has doubled the figure and earmarked an additional one million guilders (US\$660,000) to fund technical and institutional support to affected countries. INCD Chair Kjellén noted that contributions to the voluntary fund have been difficult to raise, although the situation has improved.

PANEL DISCUSSION ON WOMEN AND DESERTIFICATION

A panel discussion on Women and Desertification was held on Monday afternoon, 9 September. Five women and two men, drawn from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and Latin America, elaborated on the constraints women face in access to credit, land and decision-making processes, all of which are relevant for effectively combating desertification. The speakers came from diverse sectors: youth and women's groups, the private sector, pastoral communities, academia and government.

Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga from the Environment Liaison Centre International gave an overview of the provisions for women in the CCD. Gaudensia Kenyange, from Uganda's Commercial Bank, focused on the constraints women face to obtaining credit, while AFAD (Mali) explained the important role credit systems and training for income-generating activities could play in the fight against desertification. Venkat Ramnayya of Youth for Action (India) spoke about women and land degradation and stressed their lack of involvement in agricultural decision-making.

Allyce Kureiya from the Marsabit Development Programme (Kenya) stressed the important role economic independence played in empowering women to be involved in decision-making. Ricard Minougou of Association pour la Protection de la Nature (Burkina Faso) presented the organizations' pilot project on women and desertification.

Belinda Bruce of Farm Radio Network (Canada) elaborated on the use of radios in exchanging information aimed at improving food production, health and nutrition at the grassroots level. Elizabeth Chiedza Gwanza discussed the Zimbabwean case of land tenure, and said that if women are guaranteed access to land they will have more motivation to resist and respond to environmental degradation.

WORKING GROUP I

Working Group I, which was chaired by Mahmoud Ould El Gaouth (Mauritania), covered three issues in preparation for the first Conference of the Parties (COP-1): the Global Mechanism; designation of a Permanent Secretariat and arrangements for its functioning; and financial rules.

THE GLOBAL MECHANISM

The Group discussed the two central issues of the Global Mechanism (GM) — its functions and the criteria to select the host institution. The Secretariat's document (A/AC.241/56) was used as the basis for negotiation. The Chair's plan was to start by negotiating the least contentious subject, criteria to select the host of the Global Mechanism. Delegates argued that it would be difficult to decide on the criteria for selection before deciding its functions, so they started with the functions.

FUNCTIONS OF THE GLOBAL MECHANISM: The Secretariat's text contained a chapeau and five functions: collection and dissemination of information; analyzing and advising on request; facilitating cooperation and coordination; mobilizing and channeling resources; and reporting to the COP. Consensus was easily reached on all but one, mobilizing and channeling resources.

At the suggestion of the OECD group of countries, a new paragraph was added to the chapeau stating that the GM's function is to "promote actions leading to the mobilization of resources." Delegates also added the G-77 and China's amendment to the first paragraph emphasizing the GM's accountability to the COP, including in policy, operational modalities and activities, and the need for transparency, universality and neutrality.

The G-77 and China's proposals for additional roles on cooperation and coordination were also agreed upon. These included calling for: action to increase awareness among, and promote participation in the implementation of the CCD, of other sectors and stakeholder groups; the promotion of the full use and continued support of funding sources; and the promotion of partnership building in the mobilization of resources.

The contents of the report to the COP attracted debate. The OECD group of countries preferred an assessment on the "likely" availability of future funding. The G-77 and China objected, saying this would prejudice the content of the report. The word was dropped.

The function of mobilizing and channeling financial resources, paragraph 4, presented the most difficulty. Agreement was only reached on the GM's role to promote actions leading to the transfer of technology and use of indigenous knowledge (subparagraph (d)).

The G-77 and China supported the Secretariat's text related to resource mobilization (subparagraphs (a)-(c)). The OECD group of countries would not agree to the text unless these functions were preceded by an introduction that stated "promote actions leading to." The Group formed an informal working group, which transformed into an open-ended contact group that met Wednesday evening, 11 September, and all day Thursday. Consequently, only brief sessions of Working Group I were held on these days.

The contact group was established to draft text on these subparagraphs, but the regional and interest groups drafted and exchanged text informally instead. The G-77 and China introduced a new version late Thursday evening, which almost achieved consensus because all the paragraphs, except one, were preceded by the chapeau of interest to the OECD group of countries. The lone paragraph precipitated disagreement. When consensus failed, the G-77 and China reiterated an earlier statement that they viewed the entire document (A/AC.241/56) as a package, thus without agreement on this paragraph the whole document should be bracketed. The OECD group of countries re-introduced the proposals they had issued Monday. Delegates agreed to bracket all three texts (the Secretariat's proposals, the text introduced Thursday evening and the text of the OECD group of countries). The entire negotiated text on functions and criteria was also bracketed.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING AN INSTITUTION TO HOUSE THE GLOBAL MECHANISM: Delegates quickly reached agreement on the Secretariat's text, which outlines the three criteria to be considered in selecting an institution to house the Global Mechanism: relationship to the COP; functional capacity; and administrative and other support. The G-77 and China also introduced three new criteria for the functional capacity, which were agreed after a brief discussion on how to phrase the text. The criteria require the institution to demonstrate its capacity to: provide and/or facilitate the financing of research and the transfer, acquisition and adaptation of technology; deal with

poverty eradication and development issues; and exhibit principles of transparency, neutrality and universality in its management and operations.

The Group adopted a procedural draft decision that: transmits the INCD deliberations to INCD-10; requests IFAD and UNDP to submit their updated offers to the Secretariat by 21 October 1996; and invites governments to submit to the Secretariat written comments on the updated offers and to consider the selection of the host of the GM at INCD-10.

DESIGNATION OF A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

Delegates covered two issues related to the Permanent Secretariat: the physical location, as contained in documents A/AC.241/54 and Add.1-3; and administrative arrangements, as contained in documents A/AC.241/55 and Add.1-3, and a G-77 and China proposal from INCD-7 (A/AC.241/WG.I(VII)/L.1).

PHYSICAL LOCATION: The issue on physical location was addressed during a meeting where the three countries bidding to host the Permanent Secretariat made presentations on their offers. In a well-attended session, Spain's Minister for Environment made the first presentation, which was followed by a film on Spain and the host city, Murcia. She enumerated several cultural, social, economic and infrastructural benefits of the city, and noted ongoing desertification research in the region. Spain would provide 1100 square meters of office space indefinitely. In addition, Spain would provide US\$1 million every year in technical assistance to the Secretariat and nearly US\$8 million for desertification projects in developing countries.

Canada's offer was presented by the tri-lingual Mayor of the bidding city, Montreal. The Mayor's statement, which was given alternately in Spanish, French and English, was delivered alongside a slide presentation. The low cost of living and the presence of other international organizations were among the advantages he noted. Canada's total offer amounts to approximately US\$5.2 million.

Germany's Director General for Development Cooperation offered the city of Bonn as host, and stressed: the city's relatively low cost of living by European standards; its proximity to cities in other continents; and the need for CCD to have similar working conditions as the Climate Change Convention. Among many other commitments, Germany will provide: approximately US\$1.3 million annually, without a time limit, for the Secretariat and Secretariat events for the CCD, in addition to their assessed contributions; rent-free office space without a time limit; and relocation costs and German language courses for the Secretariat staff.

When the floor was opened for discussion, no clarifications were requested or questions raised. At the suggestion of the Chair of the Working Group, it was agreed that a committee, comprised of INCD Chair Kjellén, representatives of regional groups, the Chairs of the Working Groups and representatives from the three cities, should be established to prepare a proposal for submission to COP-1 on how the selection process should proceed.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS: The Group held two formal sessions and one informal one on this subject. In addition to the documentation provided and the opening Plenary statements by UNEP's Executive Director and the Deputy Administrator of UNDP, the two institutions provided supplementary information during a Working Group meeting. WMO also made a brief statement.

In accordance with the mandates given to it during UNCED, by the UN General Assembly and by its own Governing Council, UNEP said it would continue to support activities to combat

desertification and is therefore willing to provide administrative assistance. UNEP also clarified that its offer was not linked to any of the bidding cities. UNDP noted that its offer was to provide some support but it was not bidding to become the host institution. WMO said it would continue to offer its support to the Convention. When the Chair opened the floor for debate, no questions were raised.

During the second formal meeting on this subject, the Chair reminded delegates of the proposal made by Uganda at INCD-7, which is contained in an INCD-7 draft decision proposed by the G-77 and China, that calls on the UN Secretariat to host the Permanent Secretariat. He asked delegates to have an exchange of views on the subject, and to discuss the offers from UNDP, UNEP and WMO, in order to make a decision in favor of one of them. The Chair noted that in accordance with a decision at INCD-8, the Programme and Budget (of the Permanent Secretariat) would be taken up at INCD-10. He therefore proposed transmitting the financial aspect of the Permanent Secretariat referred to in the G-77 and China's document to INCD-10 as well. He also presented a Chair's draft decision that closely resembled the proposal the G-77 and China tabled at INCD-7, with blank spaces left to fill in the name of the institution selected.

The OECD group of countries said a decision could not be reached at this session because they still need additional information regarding: how the arrangements with the UN Secretariat would work; whether or not the WMO offer is linked to a decision for the permanent location to be Switzerland, given that WMO's headquarters are in Switzerland; what the partial support from UNDP entails; and what the reforms expected at UNEP would be. The G-77 and China stressed their wish to have the UN Secretariat as the host, since the UN hosts the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). Tunisia stated that, unlike the Convention on Biodiversity, the FCCC and CCD have been under the aegis of the UN General Assembly since the beginning and the twin conventions on climate change and desertification should be reunited. The US stressed the importance of studying the budgetary implications of each arrangement.

A two-hour informal evening meeting was convened during the second week, with the intention of receiving clarifications from the host institutions to enable the Group to reach a decision. The Chair retabled his draft decision and asked delegates to fill in the blanks. The OECD group of countries said they could only proceed to do so on the understanding that the G-77 and China draft decision would be withdrawn, to which the G-77 and China objected. The Working Group eventually adopted a procedural draft decision that was proposed by the OECD group of countries, calling on the UN Secretary-General and UNEP to answer questions posed by INCD members, for consideration at INCD-10.

DRAFT FINANCIAL RULES OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES, ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

Working Group I briefly considered the draft Financial Rules of the COP, its Subsidiary Bodies and the Permanent Secretariat (A/AC.241/45/Rev.1), but all substantive agreements were reached by an informal negotiating group that met Friday, 6 September. Most of the outstanding text left after INCD-8 was resolved, except for the references to the institutional host. Language from the financial rules for the Climate Change Convention was borrowed to: describe the working capital reserve for the General Fund (maintained at a level to be determined from time to time by the COP by consensus); and resources (contributions made each year by Parties on the basis of an indicative scale, adopted by consensus, and based on the UN scale of assessments).

Rule 23 in A/AC.241/45/Rev.2 regarding whether certain financial decisions of the COP shall be adopted "by consensus" or "by consensus whenever possible, and...as a last resort, by a two-thirds majority..." was left in brackets. During the final discussion of the issue, Austria said he and other OECD countries had understood that Rule 23 would be deleted. If not, he had minor amendments to introduce to other parts of the text. The Chair said he would recommend that the rule be deleted when he introduced the text to the closing Plenary. A draft decision was adopted to transmit the revised text to INCD-10 for further consideration.

WORKING GROUP II

Working Group II, chaired by Takao Shibata (Japan), addressed: the rules of procedure of the COP; organization of scientific and technological cooperation; and procedures for communication of information. The Chair recommended that the Group leave as little as possible for consideration at future sessions of the INCD. During meetings of Working Group II, Benin spoke on behalf of the G-77 and China.

DRAFT RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Delegates considered the revised negotiating text of the rules of procedure of the COP (A/AC.241/48/Rev.1), which reflected the deliberations of Working Group II at INCD-8. Delegates had reached Rule 22 (election of officers) during the eighth session, and began with consideration of Rule 23 (powers of the President). Benin reminded delegates that brackets remained in Rules 5 (notification of sessions) and 6 (participation of UN and specialized agencies). The Chair reminded delegates that Rule 22 contained brackets because there was no decision on the size of the Bureau. The Group did not have time to return to Rules 5, 6 and 22. Most of the remaining brackets were removed.

The election of officers of subsidiary bodies (Rule 31) and whether subsidiary bodies would vote (Rule 52) generated debate. In Rule 31, the G-77 and China proposed deleting the reference to election of the chairperson by the COP "unless the COP decides otherwise." The UK supported the flexibility that the phrase added, and proposed extending the clause to the election of vice-chairs, but the G-77 and China objected. Delegates accepted the Chair's proposal to add a sentence prior to the draft text noting that the Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology will be decided by the COP and retaining the rule as drafted.

In Rule 52 (method of voting), the G-77 and China supported retaining bracketed text noting that "with the exception of elections of the Bureau of subsidiary bodies, voting shall be restricted to plenary meetings" of the COP. The G-77 and China expressed concern that if subsidiary bodies are authorized to vote, the COP could not call into question their decisions. The UK proposed moving the text so it would follow Rule 31, and be in the section regarding subsidiary bodies, and delegates agreed.

The issue of whether the meetings of subsidiary bodies should be held in public or private, in Rule 35, also attracted lengthy debate. The G-77 and China supported "public" meetings, but the UK expressed concern that preparatory meetings would be "open to the press and the man in the street." Delegates agreed that meetings of the subsidiary bodies should be public, unless the subsidiary body concerned decides otherwise. New text was also added noting that meetings of *ad hoc* subsidiary bodies shall be private unless the body decides otherwise.

In Rule 47, regarding majority required, delegates removed text noting that a "two-thirds" majority would be required to overrule a President's ruling.

Rules specifying languages to be used were another source of debate. In Rule 52, method of voting, the G-77 and China proposed deleting the bracketed reference to voting order based on English alphabetical order. The US and UK preferred to specify a single language. Canada suggested that voting begin with the Party whose name is drawn by lot and proceed from that point based on the order of ratification. This proposal was bracketed along with the previously bracketed text.

In Rule 57 on official languages, the G-77 and China proposed retaining reference to the six official UN languages. Japan expressed concern about the budgetary implications and suggested that subsidiary bodies should reduce the need for translation as much as possible, but supported the G-77 and China proposal. The Chair noted that the issue has not been resolved by other conventions and proposed that the brackets be deleted and that he would work with Japan to incorporate their concerns.

While the Group was adopting its report, Spain pointed out that an amendment it suggested at INCD-8 was not reflected in the document. The amendment called for adequate representation of "Annex" affected country Parties. During the closing Plenary, Spain repeated this concern with respect to Rules 22 (election of officers of COP) and 31 (election of officers of subsidiary bodies). The INCD Chair said the revised text for INCD-10 will contain both the current rule and Spain's alternative in brackets. The closing Plenary adopted a decision calling for the preparation of a revised text for INCD-10 reflecting the deliberations of Working Group II (A/AC.241/WG.II(IX)/L.5).

THE ORGANIZATION OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION

During consideration of the organization of scientific and technological cooperation (A/AC.241/57), most issues that had resulted in controversy at earlier sessions of the INCD were resolved relatively quickly. Delegates generally agreed throughout the document to include language that called for a multidisciplinary approach, appropriate gender balance, and broad and equitable geographical representation.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CST): The earlier extensive debate on the advisory functions of the CST and whether the CST should "assess", as suggested by the G-77 and China, or "monitor," as preferred by the UK, was resolved by calling on the CST to "collect information, analyze, assess and report developments in science and technology."

On the issue of the composition of the Bureau of the CST in paragraph 6, as well as in Rules 22 and 31 in the rules of procedure, delegates agreed that there was no need to specify the number of Bureau members for the CST at this point. However, Spain later raised the issue, related to Rules 22 and 31 of the rules of procedure, that "Annex" affected country Parties should have adequate representation on the Bureau. He insisted that such language be included in brackets.

THE ROSTER OF EXPERTS AND AD HOC PANELS: Although INCD-9 provided the first opportunity to negotiate this text, it was adopted with only a few amendments. A question on the nature of the experts led to the clarification that "independent experts" would act in their personal capacity, express their independent scientific views and that the roster consists of independent experts, in contrast to the government-appointed members of the CST.

A contentious issue was the nomination of experts to be included on the roster. The G-77 and China expressed concern that experts could be "nominated irrespective of their nationality" and

suggested deletion of this phrase, while the UK and others argued that governments could nominate experts from countries other than their own. After extensive debate, the language was deleted because it was understood that experts from any country could be nominated.

On the issue of whether CST representatives could also be listed on the roster, the G-77 and China expressed concern that some countries would not have enough experts for both the CST and the roster. The UK objected, emphasizing the need to make a distinction between the government-appointed experts on the CST and the independent experts on the roster. Delegates agreed to delete the paragraph that stated that CST representatives could not be listed on the roster as well.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME: The Group also considered the future work programme of the CST. Delegates agreed to propose that the Secretariat should compile the views of delegations and agencies and draft a report on the work programme of similar UN bodies, their work related to desertification and suggestions for collaboration, all of which would be submitted to INCD-10. Delegates noted that the CST work programme shall follow that of the COP, and that it should include the implementation of Article 25 in the Convention, regarding networking of institutions, agencies and bodies.

PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION AND REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION

Delegates considered the output from INCD-8 regarding procedures for communication of information and review of implementation, as contained in A/AC.241/49/Rev.1. The Working Group resolved all outstanding text without making substantive changes, and transmitted a draft decision to the Plenary (A/AC.241/WG.I(IX)/L.1) recommending that COP-1 adopt the agreed text. The Plenary adopted the decision.

In connection with the bracketed paragraph 10, regarding the format and content of reports, delegates reviewed the conference room paper (CRP) that had been prepared on benchmarks and indicators. Youssef Brahimi of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) presented the CRP, which included sections on the concept of indicators, implementation indicators, impact indicators and recommendations. During the discussion that followed, delegates decided that the interim Secretariat should continue its work on indicators and involve those who worked on the CRP as well as other interested countries and organizations, prior to INCD-10. A draft decision to this effect (A/AC.241/WG.II(IX)/L.4) was adopted during the final Plenary.

CLOSING PLENARY

The closing Plenary took place Friday morning, 13 September 1996. The Executive Secretary updated the Plenary on CCD ratification, noting that the relevant instruments of Haiti and Zambia had just been received. INCD Chair Bo Kjellén then invited the Chairs of the working groups to present the reports of their respective groups.

WORKING GROUP I: Chair Mahmoud Ould El Gaouth (Mauritania) presented reports on: the identification of an organization to house the Global Mechanism; administrative arrangements for the Permanent Secretariat; draft financial rules of the Conference of the Parties, its subsidiary bodies and the Permanent Secretariat; and the future and potential location of the Permanent Secretariat. He noted that the issue of the budget was not on the INCD-9 agenda and will be discussed at INCD-10. All of the Group's agreements were reached late Thursday night, 12 September, and were provided to the Plenary in English only, without document numbers.

On the Global Mechanism, the Chair drew attention to the report, which was annexed to the draft decision that transmits the INCD-9 deliberations to INCD-10. El Gaouth pointed out that the third bracketed option of paragraph 4 titled "Promoting actions leading to the mobilization and channeling of substantial financial resources to all levels," does not reflect the changes made by the Group, and he provided the necessary corrections.

With respect to the designation of a Permanent Secretariat, he reported that the issue regarding the physical location had been taken up by the INCD Chair. He presented the Group's decision on administrative arrangements calling on the UN Secretary-General and UNEP to answer questions posed by INCD members regarding their bids for consideration at INCD-10.

He also presented a draft decision on the financial rules that transmits the revised text to INCD-10. He pointed out that Rule 23 (decision procedures) contradicted the rest of the text. He said that, pending Working Group II's discussions on the rules of procedure, Working Group I would request deletion of Rule 23, but it will remain bracketed until INCD-10.

WORKING GROUP II: The Chair, Takao Shibata (Japan), presented the Working Group's five draft decisions. He said draft decision A/AC.241/WG.II(IX)/L.1, procedures for communication and review of implementation, will be taken by COP-1.

The draft decision on the organization of scientific and technological cooperation (A/AC.241/WG.II(IX)/L.2) has three recommendations to COP-1: the terms of reference of the committee on science and technology; procedures for the establishment and maintenance of an independent roster of experts; and procedures for the establishment of *ad hoc* panels.

Draft decision A/AC.241/WG.II(IX)/L.3 refers to the preparations needed to facilitate discussion at INCD-10 on the possible work programme of the CST. It invites members to provide comments on the programme of work and requests the Secretariat to prepare a report.

Draft decision A/AC.241/WG.II(IX)/L.4 relates to the continuation of work on the development of benchmarks and indicators to measure progress in the implementation of the Convention. Shibata also presented a procedural draft decision, A/AC.241/WG.II(IX)/L.5, requesting the Secretariat to prepare a revised text on the rules of procedure for the COP for discussion at INCD-10.

ADOPTION OF DECISIONS AND INCD-9 REPORT:

Kjellén noted that the issues had advanced in such a way that there was already agreement on text to be submitted to COP-1, adding that it was not envisaged at the start of the preparations for the COP that the progress attained so far on the CST would be realized by this time. He intimated that the setting up of the Intergovernmental Panel of Experts on Desertification by the General Assembly in 1992 set the tone for adding the CST dimension to the CCD. Kjellén then invited delegates to adopt the decisions.

Working Group II's draft decisions on communication of information, the Committee on Science and Technology and the work on benchmarks and indicators, were adopted.

Spain objected to the draft decision to the COP on the organization of scientific and technological cooperation (A/AC.241/WG.II(IX)/L.2), stating that: Spain had objected to its adoption and transmission to COP-1; and there was no consensus in the working group with regard to paragraph 6 on the composition of the Bureau. He said the document should be negotiated at INCD-10 before submission to COP-1. Kjellén was reluctant to re-open discussion on the paragraph. Eventually, Spain agreed that the document be adopted for transmission to COP-1 with a footnote on the first page stating that: Spain is not party to the decision

because of a reservation on paragraph 6; and Spain has the right to raise the issue at INCD-10. Spain advanced similar concerns with respect to the rules regarding election of officers for the COP and subsidiary bodies during the adoption of the decision on the rules of procedure for the COP. The Chair said the revised text for INCD-10 will contain both the current rule and Spain's alternative in brackets. The draft decision was then adopted.

The Plenary then addressed the draft decisions agreed to in Working Group I. The text on the GM was adopted with the changes the Chair had read to reflect the agreement reached by Working Group I on 12 September. The decisions regarding administrative arrangements and financial rules were also adopted.

The Chair then presented a number of other draft decisions to the Plenary. Delegates adopted a draft decision regarding the designation of a Permanent Secretariat and arrangements for its functioning: physical location (A/AC.241/L.31). On the draft decision regarding the venue of COP-1 (A/AC.241/L.32), the Netherlands indicated it had intended to offer to host COP-1, but supported Italy and the FAO's invitation, which delegates adopted. The Chair noted that the draft decision regarding maintenance of the interim arrangements to support the Convention beyond the first COP (A/AC.241/L.33) requested the General Assembly to consider supporting the interim CCD Secretariat through 1998. The present arrangements extend until the end of 1997, but since COP-1 will take place at the end of 1997, there will be little time for the transfer from the interim to the Permanent Secretariat. The decision was adopted.

In presenting the draft decision on the organization of future work of the Committee (A/AC.241/L.34), the Chair said: it was his firm conviction that the INCD should be terminated at the tenth session; that the programme of work for INCD-10 should be structured to allow sufficient time for group consultations at the beginning of the session; and that the text authorized the Chair to organize consultations he deems necessary for the appropriate preparation of COP-1. The decision was adopted.

Rapporteur Anatolii Ovchinnikov (Uzbekistan) presented the draft report of INCD-9 (A/AC.241/L.30) and stated it would be updated based on the actions just taken at the closing Plenary. Delegates adopted the report and authorized Ovchinnikov to incorporate the day's proceedings. Kjellén said a Chair's summary of the discussion on urgent action for Africa and interim actions elsewhere would be included as an annex to the report.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: In his closing statement, Kjellén noted that negotiations on the Global Mechanism are not easy because it is a new concept and is linked to broader issues such as transfer of resources to developing countries. He hoped to conduct consultations on the institution to host the Global Mechanism, which will pave the way for a decision at the next session. He pointed to the outstanding organizational issues, such as the physical location and administration of the Permanent Secretariat, the Global Mechanism and financial decisions, and said the Interim Secretariat is preparing a document on what needs to be decided at COP-1. Kjellén also noted that unexpected progress had been made during this session and said that the discussion on urgent action shows that the CCD is a living document around which action has already been taken.

Costa Rica, on behalf of the G-77 and China, said his group had shown flexibility on the Global Mechanism, but since others had no proposals the issue was left pending. He urged participants to arrive at the next session with the political will to resolve these issues and to make INCD-10 more constructive. Ireland, on behalf of the EU, said it was important to come to INCD-10 prepared to solve the outstanding issues. Australia looked forward to concluding the negotiations at INCD-10.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF INCD-9

When INCD Chair Bo Kjellén noted at the closing Plenary that this session had accomplished more than he expected, he expressed what many delegates were feeling — slow but steady progress was made at INCD-9. A few said they had lost their fire and new blood is needed to ignite it. Newcomers said that although the issues were difficult they sensed a real willingness from all parties to find consensus, unlike many other processes of this kind.

Negotiations dealing with rules of procedure, scientific and technological cooperation, financial rules and procedures for communication of information and review of implementation were largely completed. The main issues that remain to be resolved at INCD-10 are the function of the Global Mechanism and its host institution, as well as the physical and administrative host of the Permanent Secretariat. The programme and budget of the Permanent Secretariat, which was not on the agenda at INCD-9, will be discussed at INCD-10.

Although Working Group I was bogged down by disagreement on the Global Mechanism, Working Group II sailed smoothly through most of its agenda, allowing even a brief look ahead at what to include in the work programme of the Committee on Science and Technology. Nevertheless, some delegates complained that time could have been used more efficiently, especially since meetings were often delayed by up to forty-five minutes. This was largely as a result of consultations in regional groups. Some suggested that time should be allocated before INCD-10 for regional groups to prepare their positions, to be followed by a shorter INCD session. The proponents of a shorter INCD-10 argued that longer sessions only serve to allow delegates to postpone making difficult decisions.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES UNDERWAY: Many delegates expressed satisfaction with the reports on the implementation measures being undertaken in all regions. Presentations from affected African countries reflected that their preparations had now moved from awareness raising to addressing legal and policy provisions to create an enabling environment for the participation of affected populations. Some noted that the achievements of the action programmes so far demonstrate that the Convention is worthwhile. Delegates felt that in spite of the fact that the time allocated to this debate was shorter than in the past, the reports were still of high quality. Many also attributed this to good organization and cooperation from delegates. A speakers list was prepared and publicized well in advance, delegates adhered to the five-minute time limit per speaker and many circulated supplementary information.

STEADY PROGRESS ON RATIFICATIONS: Instruments of ratification trickled in steadily during INCD-9, bringing the total to 47. With only three ratifications to go to reach the required 50, the Convention is expected to come into force in early 1997. Despite this positive development, some developing countries expressed concern that the Convention was not considered important enough by Northern countries, such as the US, the UK, France and Japan, who have not yet ratified it. Some stated that although the South has already ratified conventions that are of interest to the North, the North seems to have lost interest in ratifying and funding CCD implementation. Others argued that the problem is not the lack of political will, but the bureaucracy involved in ratification processes in some of these countries.

DESIGNATION OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT: While the bidding on the physical location of the Permanent Secretariat has begun, some delegations regretted that no offer came from Africa. The main contenders seem to be Montreal, where the cost of living is lower and co-location with the

Biodiversity Secretariat could be advantageous, and Bonn, where the Climate Change Secretariat is located and whose country offered the largest financial package. Observers noted that both are trying to establish themselves as international cities. The third contender, Murcia, in Spain, has the attraction of being located close to desertified areas, but many delegates privately quipped, “how does one get there?”

Considering the UN’s current financial constraints, the political pressure the organization is being subjected to, and the haunting past of the 1977 UN Conference on Desertification and its Programme of Action to Combat Desertification, which were marked by a lack of political will to mobilize financial resources to combat desertification, the final decision may well be in favor of the best economic offer. Yet, some caution that even such an attractive offer may be superseded by the usual politicking. Many hoped that the action taken at INCD-9 to establish a contact group consisting of the Bureau members, Working Group Chairs, representatives of regional groups and the bidding countries, would safeguard against such politicking and provide a transparent method in making this choice.

Although both WMO and UNDP have signaled an interest in providing support to the Permanent Secretariat, the strongest contenders seem to be UNEP and the UN itself. Some delegates suggested that placing the Secretariat directly under the UN and its Secretary-General would give the Secretariat a higher status, while under UNDP or UNEP it would be closer to the field. The latter seemed preferable to some in the light of the Convention’s participatory approach. Others suggested that the UNEP administration would be desirable in order to emphasize that the Convention addresses environment and not solely development issues. Some believed that oversight by the Secretary-General would be more detached and give the CCD Secretariat more autonomy, an aspect that some desired while others expressed reservations about the consequences. Notwithstanding other arguments, it seemed clear that all groups are treading cautiously and closely watching the performance of the Secretariats of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Conventions, in particular with respect to transparency, acceptance of the predominant role of the COP, and administrative and decision-making procedures. The anticipated reforms in UNEP will also have implications for the INCD’s decision.

The OECD group of countries seemed surprised that the G-77 and China expected a decision on the administration of the Permanent Secretariat at this session. They argued that it was not decided this early in other negotiations and that they needed time to consult their home departments to solve technical issues, as well as to receive more details regarding the bids. Members of the G-77 and China were disappointed that a decision could not be taken. Some believed that the OECD group of countries was stalling and not giving priority to these negotiations.

Some delegates have suggested that some people are linking the choice of location and host institution. At present, UNEP provides administrative support to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is located in Montreal. The UN Secretary-General provides administrative support to the Secretariat of the Convention on Climate Change, which is located in Bonn. The bidding cities and institutions noted that their offers are not linked together, and that the institutional presence of UNEP and the UN are not limited to a single location.

DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN: Negotiations on the Global Mechanism’s function of mobilizing resources was, for many, a repeat of the experience in Paris in June 1994. The late night meetings by informal groups, frequent adjournment of meetings, and a contact group were all used by Working Group I and were

familiar to those who had followed the same issue at INCD-5 in Paris.

Nevertheless, delegates were content with progress made on the Global Mechanism. Positions appeared to be clearer now than they were at INCD-8 and regional groups were more direct about what they wanted. Some fear that the GM will be only a costly and ineffective administrative body. One delegate joked that it should be restricted to an address on the World Wide Web. Others said the Global Mechanism is the heart and soul of the Convention. They complained that even though there is now consensus that desertification is a global problem and African countries are ready to implement the CCD, the lack of decision on the Global Mechanism signifies that there is still reluctance to support the Convention.

Several delegates remarked that the lack of consensus on the still outstanding issue is due to a confusion between the role to be played by the institution that hosts the Global Mechanism and the role of the Mechanism, which itself is not an institution. Several delegates noted that the GM cannot take the lead in mobilizing financial resources, which the Convention states clearly is the role of the Parties. The GM can only act where there is need and play a lobbying and facilitating role. Many delegates expressed fear that without multilateral arrangements, some countries and important sectors will be left out and conditionalities that come with aid may creep into the Convention. Furthermore, no mechanisms are in place to tap into the widely hailed private resources.

Delegates offered various reasons to explain the source of frustration they felt during these negotiations. Some delegates expressed concern that delegates who were not involved in the negotiation of the GM in Paris now want to renegotiate the Convention. Others suggested that the discussion was started too late in the session to realize much progress on such a difficult issue. Another factor was the poor preparation among delegates, mainly due to the frequent, unplanned changes in the agenda of Working Group I. Others suggested that more progress might have been achieved if, instead of informally exchanging text, a small drafting group comprising all interest and regional groups had been established. One delegate commented that the Mechanism would forever haunt the Convention.

UNIQUENESS VERSUS PRECEDENT: A recurrent theme at INCD-9 was whether or not to follow the precedent of other UN Conventions, especially the "sister" Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions. Observers who had followed other conventions but were new to the CCD recognized a number of the debates. For example, in the debate over several paragraphs of text in the decision on financial rules, Climate Change "junkies" preferred to replicate decisions that had been taken by the Climate Change Convention's COP while others wanted to push for more than that common denominator. Agreed language is often used in UN negotiations of all kinds, but not without the desire of some to go further and cautions by others that the agreed language is the best that can be accomplished. Some delegates also noted the tendency to insist on precedent when it supported a negotiator's preferences, only to argue for the uniqueness of the CCD and need for original language when it did not. The tension between precedence and uniqueness will continue to face delegates to the CCD long after COP-1.

SCIENCE VERSUS POLITICS: Substantive debates over the balance between scientific input and political decision making, which have plagued other UN negotiations, have also emerged in INCD deliberations. Working Group II addressed the issue in texts on the creation of the Committee on Science and Technology and rules of procedure. Observers who have followed the INCD process since its beginning were surprised at the ease with which the

contentious issues in the texts related to scientific and technological cooperation were now resolved. However, the desire that the COP should remain sovereign was an underlying force in many of the decisions.

During discussion of the rules of procedure, for example, the G-77 and China argued that subsidiary bodies, such as the Committee on Science and Technology, should not be allowed to vote except for elections of the Bureau because, if subsidiary bodies are authorized to vote, the COP may be unable to call into question their decisions. The Convention on Biological Diversity's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), which met in Montreal during the first week of INCD-9, also attempted to recognize the need for balance between political and scientific input, with the Chair suggesting from the outset that the SBSTTA not become a "mini-COP," as the previous year's deliberations had been labeled. Negotiations on the CCD will provide one forum in which this tension between politics and science will continue to be played out on the international stage.

NGOS GAIN GROUND: Negotiating sessions are always the most frustrating periods for NGOs because they find it difficult to lobby for their positions. But several delegates and NGOs alike said that the NGOs, in spite of having made few direct inputs from the floor, had realized many gains, primarily due to better preparations prior to and during the session. NGOs submitted their texts early for the regional groups to consider, which enabled some of their inputs to be taken on board. In several cases, when they followed through with one-on-one lobbying, their texts were adopted. Delegates also noted that NGOs also made good use of their daily publication, *ECO*.

THE ROAD TO THE COP: The momentum gained from incoming ratifications and the steady progress at INCD-9 led many to believe that the preparations for the first Conference of the Parties (COP-1) may be concluded at INCD-10 in January 1997, making an eleventh session unnecessary. Despite UN General Assembly arrangements for an eleventh session (probably in August 1997), the INCD Chair only anticipates the need for consultations between INCD-10 and COP-1 (planned for September or October 1997). A number of delegates expressed concern that the four-month period between INCD-9 and 10 may be insufficient for delegates and the Secretariat to complete the requested work, necessitating further consultations. In view of these two points, a number of delegates suggested postponing INCD-10 until August 1997. Some noted that unresolved issues thereafter can be decided at COP-1. While some have constantly compared the INCD and Climate Change Convention processes and have argued that not holding an eleventh session relegates the Convention to an inferior position, others have noted that one reason an INCD-11 may not be needed is that the CCD has benefited from the groundwork laid by the previous conventions.

In spite of the short formal sessions of Working Group I during both the eighth and ninth INCD sessions, the remarkable progress made by the Group at INCD-9 may be a pointer towards the importance of consultations between the regional groups before negotiating. Granted the short interval to INCD-10, and the relative difficulty of the issues that remain to be resolved, the proposal to have adequate time for regional consultations at the beginning of the next session seems vital. The suggestion of some that delegates return to the "spirit" of the Paris negotiations may also provide the needed impetus to complete the INCD's work at its final session before COP-1.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD

LAND DEGRADATION PROJECTS: The GEF STAP (Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel) will host a workshop on land degradation projects, in Dakar, Senegal, from 18-20 September 1996. Contact: Mr. Rokhaya Daba Fall, STAP/GEF, Hann Naristo, P.O. Box 6225, Dakar, Senegal; tel: +(221) 32 12 59; fax: +(221) 32 15 44.

EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT: Japan will organize a symposium, to take place in Tokyo on 17 October 1996, on desertification control measures. Contact: Mr. Shin Imai, Deputy Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; tel: +81-(0)3-3502-8111, ex. 3794; e-mail: <DK15@ismtp.maff.go.jp>.

IUCN WORKSHOP: An IUCN workshop on arid land and biosafety will be held in Montreal, Canada, 17-20 October 1996. Contact: Tim Lash, Director, Regional IUCN office; tel: +1 514 287-9704.

EBB SEMINARS: The European Environmental Bureau (EBB) is planning a number of seminars in Brussels under the title "Enhancing the EU implementation of the CCD." The first will be held from 24-25 October 1996 and the second will be held in the first half of December 1996. Contact: EBB, 26, rue de la Victoire, B-1060 Bruxelles, Belgium; tel: +32-2-539.00.37; fax: +32-2-539.09.21; e-mail: <ebb@gn.ap.org>.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDITERRANEAN DESERTIFICATION: The European Commission and National Agricultural Research Foundation will organize a conference on this issue, to be held in Crete, Greece, from 29 October to 1 November 1996. Contact: Dr. P. Balabanis or Mr. D. Peter, DG XII — Science, Research and Development, Environment and Climate Programme, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049, Brussels, Belgium; fax: +32-2-29 63 024; e-mail: <panagiotis.balabanis@dg12.cec.be>.

SUSTAINABLE USE OF RANGELANDS: An international workshop on sustainable use of rangelands and desertification control will be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from 3-6 November 1996. Contact: Dr. Said Ahmad, Technical Division, IFAD, Via Del Serarico 107, Rome, Italy; fax: +(396) 519 1702.

GOVERNMENT FOCAL POINTS: A meeting for government focal points and NGOs will be held in Mauritania from 18-22 November 1996. Contacts: Ahme Salem ould Ahmed, Conseiller, Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Rural; or the INCD Secretariat; fax: +(41-22)979 90 30/1; e-mail: <Secretariat.incd@unep.ch>.

NGO MEETINGS: An Afro-Asian NGO forum on South-South and South-North cooperation for implementation of the Convention will be organized by RIOD-India and Youth for the Action in Hyderabad, India, from 9-12 December 1996. Contact: Venkat Ramnaya; tel: +91-40-7632474; fax: +91-40-7632372; e-mail: <yfa.ven@sm1.sprintrpg.sprint.com>.

A Central Asian NGO meeting will be held in Kyrgyzstan in October 1996. Contact: Dr. Tatyana M. Bragina, Kazakhstan NGO "Naurzum;" tel: +(314-54) 91-0-36; e-mail: <naurzum@glas.apc.org> or Oleg Tsaruk, Executive Director, International Central Asian Biodiversity Institute; tel: +7(3712)91-3935; e-mail: <tashkent@glas.apc.org>.

A regional NGO seminar on the implementation of the CCD will be hosted by l' Association pour un Développement Durable (Association for Sustainable Development) in Mauritania, from 16-17 November 1996. Contact: Mohamed Abdallahi ould Tolba, President, B.P. 4848 Nouakchott, Mauritania. tel: +(2222)52623, 51325, 50440; fax: +(2222)57522.

INCD-10: The next session of the INCD is scheduled to take place from 6-16 January 1997 at UN Headquarters in New York. Contact: CCD Interim Secretariat; E-mail: <Secretariat.incd@unep.ch> or check out the INCD World Wide Web site at <<http://www.unep.ch/incd.html>>.