



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## INCD-10 HIGHLIGHTS 6-7 JANUARY 1997

The tenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Convention to Combat Desertification (INCD-10) is meeting in New York from 6-17 January, 1997. Delegates met in a brief opening Plenary on Monday, 6 January, following which they met in regional groups. They also met in Plenary during the afternoon on Tuesday, 7 January, to hear introductory statements, and consider the status of signature and ratification and NGO accreditation.

### OPENING PLENARY, 6 JANUARY 1997

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK:** INCD Chair Bo Kjellén (Sweden) opened the brief Monday morning Plenary. The programme of work was adopted and it was noted with satisfaction that the Convention had entered into force since the last INCD session.

Delegates adopted the Agenda (A/AC.241/62) and agreed to alter the organization of work so that Working Group I would be the only group to meet on Wednesday, 8 January, to allow for maximum attention to be given to the Global Mechanism on which Working Group I's discussions would begin Wednesday. Working Group II will commence on Thursday.

### PLENARY, 7 JANUARY 1997

**NGO ACCREDITATION:** INCD Chair Kjellén drew attention to the accreditation of 23 new NGOs, as contained in A/AC.241/9/Add.13, which would bring the total to 360. At the suggestion of the Chair, the Committee postponed discussion of the issue to the Plenary of the second week, Monday, 13 January.

**ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU:** Côte d'Ivoire, current Chair of the African Group, proposed the election of Amb. Yacoubou Adam Fassassi of Benin as Vice-Chair in the Bureau of the Committee, to replace Amb. René Valéry Mongbé of Benin who has taken up another assignment. Amb. Fassasi was elected by acclamation.

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS:** Under-Secretary General Nitin Desai, UN Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, explained that the CCD is a truly sustainable development Convention. He said its content deals with

core development issues, provides the opportunity to integrate environment and development at the point at which action takes place and provides a test case of our capacity to implement the ambitious programmes that are negotiated at the international level. He reiterated the Department's commitment to support the Interim Secretariat.

Chair Kjellén noted that the Convention had entered into force on 26 December 1996 after the 50th ratification by Chad. He pointed out that for the first Conference of the Parties (COP-1) to be successful, adequate preparation is needed. The central issues at this session are: the functioning and host organization of the Global Mechanism; the work programme and budget and the role of the Permanent Secretariat, as contained in document A/AC.241/65; and the enabling of the Committee on Science and Technology to meet in connection with COP-1. Other issues are: the accreditation of NGOs at COP-1; rules of procedure and financial rules; and benchmarks and indicators. The Secretariat will circulate a check-list of decisions that have to be taken at COP-1. Kjellén stressed the time pressure the Committee is under in order to prepare for COP-1 and pointed out the link between the INCD process and the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the UN Special Session of the General Assembly for the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 to be held later this year. On Monday, 13 January, the general negotiating situation will be reviewed. He said the Working Groups must finalize their work at the very latest on Tuesday evening, January 14.

Salif Diallo, Minister of Environment and Water of BURKINA FASO, welcomed the entry into force of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) two years after its adoption. He noted that action in Africa had been slow, but ensured that African ministries were committed to implementing the CCD. He urged developed countries to raise awareness about the CCD and called for the realization of the spirit of partnership in the Convention. Burkina Faso has planned a national partnership system, which is going to hold its first meeting in June. He also highlighted the importance of the Global Mechanism. Without it, the CCD would lose its innovative character and sisterhood with the conventions on biodiversity and climate change.

MONGOLIA's Minister of Nature and the Environment, Tsohiogiin Adyasuren, noted the importance of the World Food Summit held late 1996 and emphasized the strong link between poverty alleviation, food security issues and desertification. In

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Mongolia, combatting desertification, biodiversity and decentralization are being dealt with in an integrated manner. He noted the link between land tenure, desertification and food security issues. He added that, in Mongolia, the state owns the land, which affects land use practices, thus it is preparing to develop a legal framework for land ownership by its citizens.

Executive Secretary Diallo stated that 60 countries have now acceded to or ratified the Convention. He updated delegates regarding preparatory measures and national and subregional action in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Thirty African countries are already at work to establish national frameworks. An Asian regional meeting will take place in Beijing in May 1997. He noted continuing support for NGOs.

The Assistant Administrator and Director of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, highlighted aspects of UNDP's CCD-related support. UNDP core resources allocated to support development in developing countries affected by desertification amounted to over US\$1 billion from 1992-1996. She urged the CCD focal points in affected countries to ensure that their governments give priority to the issues of drought and desertification and their obligations under the Convention, in the context of the UNDP sixth programming cycle. UNDP recently completed a study regarding debt-for-environment swaps. She noted the importance of defining the parameters of the partnership building concept stressed in the Convention. She said the Global Mechanism should be viewed as a flexible and dynamic instrument that can be used by the Parties to anticipate emerging and changing priorities. She reiterated UNDP's readiness to serve as host to the Global Mechanism, or any other hosting arrangement that may be decided upon.

IFAD's Assistant President, Economic Policy and Resource Strategy Department, Shigeaki Tomita, reviewed IFAD's CCD-related activities. In the two years since adoption of the Convention, IFAD has committed more than US\$600 million for interventions in dryland areas around the world. He said IFAD has been supporting the establishment of enabling frameworks at the local level and that investment in research and technology transfer for the drylands has become an increasingly significant part of IFAD operations. He said the Global Mechanism must go beyond a clearing house function to actively solicit and facilitate the participation of financing institutions and the private sector in implementing the Convention. He stated the IFAD Executive Board has taken note of the possibility that IFAD might be called upon to consider a more detailed proposal from the INCD.

Tanzania, on behalf of the G-77 and CHINA, stated that the test of the partnership established in the CCD lies in the mobilization of sufficient financial resources, provision of new and additional funding and the transfer of ecologically sound technologies. Comparing the CCD to the conventions on biological diversity and climate change, he stated that the CCD should not be relegated to a second-class convention. Thus, establishing a global financial mechanism for the CCD, with interest and priority equal to the GEF's, will place the CCD on a par with the other two conventions, as well as provide a first step towards taking adequate measures to combat desertification. He added that the Committee should receive the support of all member States, thus essential budgetary funds for the preparation of COP-1 should be provided to the Interim Secretariat.

The Netherlands, on behalf of the EU, along with Cyprus, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Iceland, were pleased

that the Convention had entered into force as early as 26 December 1996. The EU said that since this is the last session of the INCD, all the necessary preparations for the implementation of the CCD should be made before the UN Special Session in June 1997. He also said that the Global Mechanism should promote actions leading to the mobilization and channeling of resources.

On behalf of the International NGO Network on Desertification (RIOD), Michael Angstreich, of the Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development, stressed that past efforts to mitigate desertification were negatively influenced by: the minimal allocation of resources by national governments to environmental programmes; a legacy of colonial legislation; the introduction of market economies through economic structural adjustment programmes; and limited participation by local populations. The National Action Programmes are the key operational tools for concrete action. He pointed out that partnership building processes have not even started in many countries. He said that the Global Mechanism can ensure a result-oriented implementation of the CCD and referred to the proposal regarding the "crucial" paragraph 4 that the NGOs have submitted for delegates to consider.

#### **STATUS OF SIGNATURE AND RATIFICATION:**

Executive Secretary Diallo noted that Burundi and Argentina submitted their instruments of ratification on Monday, 6 January, bringing the total number to 60. Diallo pointed out that in order for countries to be able to participate as Parties to the Convention at COP-1, they have to submit their instruments of ratification by 29 June. Diallo also noted the balanced distribution of ratifications between developed and developing, as well as among developing countries.

IRAN, CHINA, PARAGUAY and GUINEA noted recent national action to ratify the Convention and indicated their instruments would be deposited soon. BRAZIL reported its national process is underway to ratify the CCD. MAURITANIA called on developed countries to express their support for affected countries by ratifying the CCD.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

As the multimedia displays for the three countries bidding to host the Permanent Secretariat were put in place in the UN basement corridors, delegates noted that lobbying for the Secretariat location is heating up. Tuesday evening, Spain hosted a dinner for Heads of Delegations to further explain their offer of the city of Murcia. Germany (Bonn) will host a lunch Thursday, while Canada's (Montréal) lunch is planned for Monday of the second week. Although there are no expectations that additional resources will be placed on the table, delegates expect questions such as the long-term commitment and possible extension of the offers to be raised.

#### **THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY**

**WORKING GROUP I:** The Working Group is expected to meet during the morning and afternoon in Conference Room 1 to consider the Global Mechanism.

**CONTACT GROUP:** The Contact Group considering the location for the Permanent Secretariat will meet at 6:30 pm in Conference Room 9.