



THE FOURTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 11 - 22 DECEMBER 2000

The Fourth Conference of the Parties (COP-4) to the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) opens today in Bonn, Germany. Among the items on the agenda of the two week meeting is the review of reports on the implementation of the Convention in regions other than Africa. These include reports on the progress made in preparing and implementing national, sub-regional and regional action programmes, reports from developed country Parties and information from relevant UN bodies, as well as information on the financing of the CCD's implementation by multilateral institutions including the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The COP will also consider an additional regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern European countries and discuss a declaration on commitments to enhance the implementation of the Convention. A Special Segment on Convention implementation will take place on 18-19 December.

The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) is scheduled to meet on 12-14 December to: review the reports of the *ad hoc* panels of experts on traditional knowledge and on early warning systems, consider a second phase of the survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies; and review the roster of independent experts and its use.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CCD

The CCD was adopted on 17 June 1994 and was opened for signature in October 1994 in Paris. It entered into force on 26 December 1996. The Convention recognizes the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer so that it is demand-driven, and the involvement of local populations. The core of the CCD is the development of national and sub-regional and regional action programmes by national governments in cooperation with donors, local populations and NGOs. Since COP-3, and following the UN Millennium Summit, the number of ratifications have increased from 159 to 171. The newest Party is the United States, which deposited its instruments of ratification on 17 November 2000.

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION: 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 an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD). The

INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994, during which delegates drafted the Convention and four regional Annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean.

THE INTERIM PERIOD: Pending the CCD's entry into force, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports on urgent action taking place in Africa and interim measures in other regions, and to prepare for COP-1. The preparations included discussion of the Secretariat's programme and budget, the functions of and administrative arrangements for the Global Mechanism, and the establishment of the CST. Considerable progress was made, especially on scientific and technological cooperation, but some important issues, such as the size and membership of the COP Bureau, the host institutions and some functions of the Global Mechanism were unresolved.

COP-1: The First Conference of the Parties (COP-1) met in Rome, Italy, from 29 September to 10 October 1997. The CST held its first session simultaneously on 2-3 October. COP-1 and CST-1 agendas were primarily organizational matters. Delegates selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the Permanent Secretariat for the Convention and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), as the organization to administer the Global Mechanism. At the CST's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the continuation of the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators and decided that CST-2 should consider linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. One Plenary meeting was devoted to a dialogue between NGOs and delegates. Delegates subsequently adopted a proposal that Plenary meetings at future COPs be devoted to similar NGO dialogues.

COP-2: Parties met in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 November to 11 December 1998. The CST met in parallel to the COP on 1-4 December. Delegates approved arrangements for the institutional linkage between the Convention and the UN Secretariat and the headquarters agreement with the German Government. The Secretariat moved to Bonn in early 1999. The COP approved adjustments to its budget and adopted the outstanding rules of procedure concerning Bureau members, but retained bracketed language regarding majority voting absent consensus. Eastern and Central European countries were invited to submit to COP-3 a draft regional implementation annex. The CST established an *ad hoc* panel to follow up its discussion on links between traditional and modern knowledge. Delegates considered, but deferred to COP-3, decisions on the Secretariat's medium-term strategy, adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding between the COP and IFAD

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regarding the Global Mechanism, and the G-77/China proposal to establish a Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention.

COP-3: The Parties met for COP-3 in Recife, Brazil, on 15-26 November 1999. The CST convened on 16-19 November 1999. The COP decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group to review the reports on national, sub-regional and regional action programmes to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention. Delegates also agreed to continue consultations on the draft additional regional implementation annex, with a view to adopting it at COP-4. They noted the need for a declaration on the commitments to enhance implementation of the obligations of the Convention and decided to invite proposals for the formulation of such a declaration for consideration and adoption at COP-4. The COP also appointed an *ad hoc* panel on traditional knowledge and an *ad hoc* panel on early warning systems. Delegates decided to further consider the operational strategy of the Global Mechanism at COP-4.

RECENT MEETINGS

Several interregional, regional and national meetings were convened over the past year to follow-up on COP-3 decisions and/or prepare for COP-4.

SECOND FORUM FOR AFRICAN AND LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES: This meeting was held on 4-8 March 2000, in Bamako, Mali. The objective of the meeting was to exchange information and strengthen cooperation between Africa and the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Over 60 delegates from 30 countries participated in the meeting. They discussed how to enhance South-South cooperation, their experiences in elaborating and implementing national action programmes (NAPs), migration as a cause and consequence of desertification and drought, and application of traditional knowledge in the context of NAPs. The meeting stressed the need for comprehensive and integrated interregional cooperation through effective and concrete actions and reiterated the fundamental role of developed countries in helping affected countries by providing support. In their conclusions, the participants: appealed for support to implement the platform for cooperation; urged the CCD Secretariat to increase cooperation with sub-regional and regional institutions to make use of their expertise; invited countries in both regions to include traditional knowledge in NAP implementation; and invited partners in development to review in detail the partnership agreements proposed and to assist in their implementation with adequate means.

ASIAN REGIONAL THEMATIC PROGRAMME NETWORK ON DESERTIFICATION MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT (TPN1 WORKSHOP): This workshop, hosted by the government of Japan, was held at the United Nations University in Tokyo on 28-30 June 2000. About 70 participants attended the workshop, including experts and CCD national focal points from 14 TPN1 member countries, international organizations, sub-regional organizations, as well as experts from other countries in Asia, Europe and North America. Participants discussed desertification monitoring and assessment in several Asian countries, related scientific and technical matters and set out agreements and reflected on future work. Recognizing that the lack of resources has been the major obstacle for carrying out the TPN1 work programmes, the participants expressed concern over future resource mobilization for the network and called for support from international societies, donor governments and agencies. The participants also welcomed the Global Mechanism initiatives to pursue resource mobilization to support the TPN1 activities.

On capacity building and training for technical staff, they called for future consultations for possible capacity building programmes. The meeting discussed the need to strengthen the information network that will promote exchanges on data management, research activities, the application and development of analytical methods as well as developments in the new information technologies, and strategies for land-use planning and management of drylands for sustainable development. Participants said efforts should be made to promote the application of identified benchmarks and indicators and report such experiences to the future TPN1 workshop and through the TPN1 information system.

REGIONAL MEETING FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: The Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the CCD was convened in collaboration with the government of El Salvador on 16-19 October 2000 in San Salvador. The objectives of the meeting were to: exchange experiences on the preparation NAPs; highlight the progress made by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Convention in the region; examine the work done by the Regional Executive Committee; analyze the project proposals comprising the Regional Action Programme (RAP); and examine the conclusions of the synthesis of the national reports and the implementation of the sub-regional and regional action programmes. The 53 participants represented governments, regional organizations, NGOs and other sectors. Decisions included: a request to the GEF to open a window to address the priorities reflected by the Latin American and Caribbean country reports; a request to the CST to formulate a unified system of benchmarks and indicators to allow for the evaluation of environmental services and the social and economic benefits in addressing land degradation and the mitigation of drought and desertification; and a request for a COP resolution ensuring the funding of the regional coordination units through the CCD Secretariat.

AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE: This meeting was held in Algiers, Algeria, on 22-24 October 2000, and was attended by 38 CCD National Focal Points, representatives of six sub-regional organizations and seven NGOs. Delegates considered the COP-3 outcomes relating to CCD implementation in African countries, discussed implementation of pertinent COP-3 decisions, and reviewed CCD implementation progress. Delegates noted Africa's interest in specific COP-4 agenda items including: the review on reports on CCD implementation; the procedure for the review of CCD implementation; the Recife initiative to enhance the implementation of the Convention; the review of the Global Mechanism's operational strategy; and the review of the reports on traditional knowledge and on early warning systems. Among their recommendations they urged COP-4 to: use the Secretariat's draft text of the declaration to enhance CCD implementation as the basis for COP-4 negotiations; insist that the Global Mechanism operational strategy clearly underlines the ways and means of mobilizing and channelling financial and other resources; build financial synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements; and adopt a decision formally establishing a committee to review the implementation of the Convention as a subsidiary body of the COP.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS: Informal consultations in regional groups will be held throughout the morning.

PLENARY: The opening Plenary will convene at 3:00 pm. The COP will likely establish a sessional Committee of the Whole (COW) to deal with some agenda items.