



## THE FIFTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (COP-5): 1-12 OCTOBER 2001

The Fifth Conference of the Parties (COP-5) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (CCD) opens today at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Among the issues to be considered by the Conference are additional procedures or institutional mechanisms for the regular review of the implementation of the Convention, ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), a review of the report on the activities of the Global Mechanism, as well as consideration, and possibly conclusion, of such outstanding issues as procedural and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions of implementation, annexes on arbitration and conciliation procedures, and Rule 47 of the rules of procedure on voting in absence of consensus.

A number of other events are planned during the Conference. Two half-day sessions have been set aside on 5 and 10 October for open dialogue between NGOs and governments. A special segment is scheduled for 8-9 October at which Parties are expected to review and make statements on CCD implementation. Two events will take place in parallel to the COP: the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) is scheduled to meet from 2-4 October, while the fourth interparliamentary Round Table is expected to take place from 4-5 October.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CCD

The Convention to Combat Desertification 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, subregional and regional action programmes (NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs, respectively) by national governments, in cooperation with donors, local populations and NGOs. There are currently 176 Parties to the Convention. The newest Party is Belarus, which acceded to the Convention on 29 August 2001.

**NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION:** In 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), adopted Reso-

lution 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 fifth annex for Central and Eastern Europe was elaborated and adopted during COP-4 in December 2000.

**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 financial mechanism under the Convention, 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 concurrently on 2-3 October. The COP-1 and CST-1 agendas consisted primarily of organizational matters. Delegates selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the Convention's Permanent Secretariat 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

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regarding majority voting in the absence of 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 linkages 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 regarding the Global Mechanism, and the G-77/China proposal to establish a committee on the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

**COP-3:** The Parties met for COP-3 in Recife, Brazil, from 15-26 November 1999. The CST met in parallel to the COP from 16-19 November. The COP approved the long-negotiated Memorandum of Understanding between the COP and IFAD regarding the Convention's Global Mechanism. It decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group (AHWG) to review and analyze in depth the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes in order 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 for Eastern and Central Europe, with a view to adopting it at COP-4. They noted the need for a declaration on the commitments to enhance implementation 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. It decided to consider the operational strategy of the Global Mechanism at COP-4.

**COP-4:** Parties met from 11-22 December 2000, in Bonn, Germany. The CST met in tandem with the COP on 12-15 December. Although many participants left the Conference contemplating the missed opportunities, laying blame on time lost to procedural obstacles that hindered progress on substantial issues relating to the review of CCD implementation, the Conference's notable achievements were the adoption of the fifth regional annex for Eastern and Central Europe, commencement of work by the *ad hoc* working group to review CCD implementation, initiation of the consideration of modalities for the establishment of a committee to review implementation of the Convention (CRIC), submission of proposals to improve the work of the CST, and the adoption of a decision on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support for CCD implementation. Delegates also decided to hold a resumed session to conclude the work of the AHWG before COP-5.

## INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS

**AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION:** The AHWG met in a three-week resumed session in Bonn, Germany, from 19 March - 6 April 2001, with participation from over 170 countries. The session reviewed 114 national and subregional reports and, among other issues, discussed the new strategies and policy frameworks, the implementation review process, the financial mechanism for the CCD and strengthening cooperation between regions. Developing countries reiterated the urgent need to open a GEF window for the implementation of the CCD in order to overcome what is perceived as a serious financial bottleneck in the implementation of the CCD and also called for the urgent establishment of a consultative mechanism at the country level to conclude partnership arrangements. Developed country Parties spelled out their efforts in supporting the implementation process and made proposals for further improvement. Whereas some donors made reference to the availability of financial resources, one donor indicated that it would

consider proactively supporting an increase of financial resources to combat desertification at the forthcoming replenishment of the GEF.

**AD HOC PANEL ON EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS:** This meeting was held on 4-8 June 2001, in Fuji Yoshida, Japan, to consider four issues stipulated in decision 14/COP-4: the performance of early warning and monitoring and assessment systems; methods for and approaches to prediction of drought and monitoring of desertification; mechanisms to facilitate an exchange of information between scientific and technological institutions; and more detailed measures for drought and desertification preparedness, in cooperation with the approaches from hazard protection to risk management, adopted by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The Panel made several recommendations (ICCD/COP (5)/CST/4) on each subject, which include: working with community groups responsible for data collection; analyzing a variety of socio-economic data disaggregated by gender; improving the understandability and accessibility of remote sensing products for decision-makers and end-users; integrating traditional knowledge into monitoring and assessment activities; and creating conditions for the participation of local resource users in planning, implementation and evaluation of local action programmes.

**REGIONAL INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS:** Two inter-regional meetings were held between Africa and Asia, and Africa and the Latin American and Caribbean regions. The Tripartite Venezuela/Mali/Cuba Workshop on The Platform for Cooperation between Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 21-25 May 2001 in Havana, Cuba. Participants' recommendations include commitment to carry out exchange programmes for specialists and technical advisors in both regions and to organize annually, beginning in 2002 and on a rotational basis, two 15- to 20-day training sessions for specialists and technicians on the theme of soil salinity. The CCD Secretariat is to forward a request on project financing to the GEF and the Workshop recommendations to relevant UN agencies and bodies, and multilateral and bilateral funding agencies.

The Third Asia-Africa Forum on Combating Desertification and Mitigating the Effects of Drought took place on 21-25 June 2001, in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, as a continuation of efforts to exchange experiences and initiate cooperation on the basis of lessons learned under the Africa and Asia CCD Regional Implementation Annexes. The Forum's objective was to carry out an assessment of the Asia-Africa Framework for Action, which was adopted in Beijing in 1997. The Forum noted delays in the implementation of the follow-up actions made at the Second Forum due partly to methodological difficulties facing national focal points in their attempts to implement and mainstream NAPs.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS:** Informal regional group meetings will take place all morning.

**OPENING CEREMONY:** The opening Plenary is scheduled for 4:30 pm in Conference Room XVIII. Statements will be made by CCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo, COP-4 President Zambini Batjargal (Mongolia), and Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland Head Joseph Deiss.

**PLENARY:** A brief Plenary will take place immediately thereafter to consider organizational matters, including the adoption of the agenda, election of officers, organization of work and accreditation of observers. The elected COP-5 President is expected to make his opening statement.