



CCD COP-5 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2001

Plenary met in the morning and afternoon for the High Level Special Segment and heard statements from the Presidents of Cape Verde and Venezuela, the Prime Ministers of Mozambique, Niger and Benin, the UN Secretary-General, government ministers, and heads of UN organizations and agencies, multilateral bodies, and regional organizations.

HIGH LEVEL SPECIAL SEGMENT

COP-5 President Charles Basset (Canada) welcomed dignitaries and delegates to the High Level Special Segment and urged them to find ways to relieve the suffering of people by effectively addressing the nexus of poverty, desertification and land degradation.

CCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo stated that the High Level Special Segment was a reminder that the CCD process depends on political will and supported a participatory approach in combating desertification. He then read a message on behalf of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who commended the CCD's work in combating poverty, urged the international community to mobilize resources for affected countries, and supported making the Global Environment Facility (GEF) the Convention's main financial mechanism.

Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, President of Cape Verde, said the success of the CCD depends on political will and a predictable financial mechanism such as the GEF. He stressed the importance of stakeholder participation and said the CCD COP should: establish a follow-up committee to review CCD implementation (CRIC); fund regional coordination units (RCUs); and consider ways to contribute to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

Hugo Chavez Frias, President of Venezuela, expressed concern at the current military response to the terrorist attacks in the US, and stated that lasting peace will only be achieved by addressing poverty, inequality and injustice, which he said were the causes of violence. Emphasizing the links between poverty and desertification, he called for global cooperation and new ideas in tackling environmental degradation, and stressed that current neo-liberal models are not the answer. He further proposed cutting global military spending by 50% and using the funds to address poverty and environmental issues. Although desertification does not seriously affect Venezuela, he underscored his country's commitment to tackling this "international problem" by announcing support for South-South cooperation on desertification-related projects.

Pascoal Manuel Mocumbi, Prime Minister of Mozambique, highlighted the linkages between climate change and desertification, noting that massive flooding in Mozambique had caused soil degradation, destruction of infrastructure and economic stagnation. Stressing that "combating desertification is combating poverty," he outlined Mozambique's Poverty Action Plan for 2001-5, and called on the COP to regularly review CCD implementation at the national level. He urged the GEF to add land degradation and desertification as a focal area, and said it should be designated as the CCD financial mechanism.

Hama Amadou, Prime Minister of Niger, highlighted his country's difficulties in addressing desertification and called for urgent CCD implementation, stressing in particular the role of the international community in providing technological and financial assistance to Africa. He also expressed support for a CCD subsidiary body to review implementation, an increase in the Secretariat's budget, and South-South cooperation.

Benin's Prime Minister, Bruno Amousou, highlighted his country's seven-year plan to address desertification, welcomed the GEF's offer to support the CCD as the financial mechanism and, as a beneficiary country, thanked Venezuela for its support.

Following speeches by heads of state and government, delegates heard statements from other high-level country and IGO representatives. Speakers from many affected developing countries stressed the need to resolve outstanding COP-5 issues such as the GEF financing of the CCD, financing of RCUs, the establishment of a CRIC, and the CCD biennium budget, while some developed country Parties stressed mainstreaming desertification NAPs in poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) and national strategies for sustainable development. Developing country representatives also urged industrialized Parties to demonstrate a commitment to CCD implementation by increasing financial support and technology transfer. In addition, many speakers endorsed the CCD's critical role in addressing land degradation, and highlighted the opportunity for COP-5 to provide clear guidance and input to the 2002 WSSD.

MAURITANIA outlined its national initiatives to combat desertification and said the CCD can be revitalized by, *inter alia*, providing new and additional resources to the Global Mechanism (GM) and giving support to, and engaging in dialogue with, NGOs. Noting that COP-5 is taking place at a time when the global community has become acutely aware of the meaning of vulnerability, NORWAY said poverty is the single greatest threat to sustainable development, and emphasized that the CCD's financing is its most critical challenge.

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IFAD recognized the important role of the GM in mobilizing resources and said IFAD will contribute another US\$2.5 million to help the GM carry out its work. UNDP said the CCD is not receiving the attention it deserves compared with other environmental conventions. He added that UNDP is giving drylands a high priority and is committed to increasing support to land degradation-related projects in the GEF portfolio. The UNFCCC highlighted the political, ecological, economic, and sociological linkages with the CCD, as well as a trilateral arrangement with the CBD. The WMO noted its ongoing work to, *inter alia*: support enhanced observation systems, increase agricultural programmes for adaptation to climate change, and further enhance climate prediction capabilities. The GEF said it was considering designating land degradation as a focal area for funding and including an accompanying proposal for US\$500 million for land degradation activities during the next replenishment period. Highlighting the benefits of collaboration, he encouraged Parties to continue to seek funding from multiple sources.

The G-77/CHINA expressed satisfaction with the emerging consensus on the establishment of the CRIC. He also called for: the provision of sufficient funding in the CCD's core budget to cover the functioning of the RCUs; action by the GEF to designate land degradation as a focal area; and a decision to invite the GEF to become the CCD's financial mechanism. The EU highlighted the need for, *inter alia*: funding requests to reflect NAPs; the responsibility of developed countries to promote bilateral partnerships; and support for a new GEF funding window. Noting the possibility that affected countries might soon become EU members, the EUROPEAN COMMISSION indicated its intention to strengthen its participation in various CCD forums and drew attention to: needed policy action at the national level in affected countries; poverty alleviation as a central development objective of the EC; and EC efforts to address problems associated with global trade, aid and investment.

Stressing the need for a cooperative approach, GERMANY emphasized: participatory approaches in CCD implementation; progress to open a GEF window for the CCD; and the CCD's potential role in bridging global inequalities. SWEDEN expressed satisfaction at the GM and CST's work and emphasized a "people-centered" approach at national and regional levels and the need for the COP to send a message on accessing resources to the Financing for Development Conference.

CHINA noted that desertification affects 27% of its total land area and 400 million of its people. He reported on recent legislation on sand prevention and control that marks "a milestone" in the country's efforts, and stressed financial assistance and technology transfer as critical to effective CCD implementation. CROATIA outlined national challenges in addressing land degradation, including the existence of more than one million anti-personnel mines.

SWITZERLAND noted interlinkages between the Rio Conventions and called on the CCD to promote an integrated approach. He stressed the importance of prioritizing land degradation and poverty issues in the WSSD. CANADA highlighted the importance of partnerships and the need to promote synergies between environmental agreements, and supported using the momentum of the WSSD to build public and political support for sustainable development.

ZIMBABWE reported on its actions to develop a NAP with wide stakeholder participation and the lack of sufficient funds to successfully realize it, and called on participants to take advantage of COP-5 to share ideas on NAP implementation. NEPAL outlined the country's national poverty reduction and land degradation ini-

atives and called for special preferences to the least developed countries in CCD implementation. TANZANIA noted the need to collectively resolve the problem of international terrorism, highlighted the mainstreaming of its NAP in national and subregional programmes, and said success in the WSSD would be measured by how well poverty is addressed. MALI elaborated on its anti-poverty and desertification goals and urged delegates to resolve outstanding issues, such as the creation of CST expert groups. He also called for financing mechanisms and other tools that can hasten CCD implementation.

JORDAN reported on its efforts to mitigate desertification and land degradation, and urged assistance in implementing NAPs. He also highlighted the need for regional and subregional cooperation, the significant role of NGOs, and the value of raising public awareness. MONGOLIA outlined its responses to land degradation and drought at the domestic level, stressed the need for North-South and South-South cooperation, and urged close cooperation between the CCD Secretariat, the GM and the GEF.

The CZECH REPUBLIC reported on a CCD meeting it had hosted recently, and offered its expertise in various CCD-related fields. UNESCO reported on its relevant activities, including an education kit for teachers of pupils aged 10-12, and its Man in the Biosphere initiative. He stressed UNESCO's desire to intensify collaboration on environmental issues, noting the need to avoid duplication.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The High Level Segment got off to a high level start with statements by two presidents and three prime ministers. Of particular interest was the impassioned speech by Venezuela's President, Hugo Chavez, with some delegates commenting on his ability to link desertification to poverty and the recent terrorist attacks and military reprisals. Many attending the session welcomed the relatively high profile of political leaders compared to previous years, with some saying this rebuts claims that the CCD is not receiving the international attention it deserves. Although many delegates seem to feel that the two days of high-level statements are useful in reaffirming the Convention's importance, some participants expressed concern that their time could be better spent working in parallel meetings tackling the substantive thorny issues on the agenda such as the programme and budget and the CRIC. According to participants in contact groups addressing these issues, some progress has been made, particularly on the CRIC, although much remains to be done to secure a successful outcome.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

HIGH LEVEL SPECIAL SEGMENT: The Special Segment reconvenes at 10:00 am in Conference Room XVIII for an interactive dialogue session that will address the poverty-environment nexus.

The Special Segment will reconvene at 3:00pm in Conference Room XVIII to hear statements from 13 ministers and eight deputy ministers, as well as heads of UN and multilateral agencies, inter-governmental organizations and an NGO representative.

SIDE EVENT: A panel of eminent persons will meet in the afternoon from 3:00-5:00 pm in Conference Room VIII on the theme, "The poverty-environment nexus in the context of a timely and efficient CCD implementation." Speakers will include former UNEP Executive Director Mostafa Tolba, Canada's former Premier Pierre-Marc Johnson, Mahmoud Sahnoun, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Africa, Marie-Angelique Savane, former Director of UNFPA in Senegal, Egyptian Economist Amir Samin, and Jean Ziegler, Member of Parliament and Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, UNCHR, Switzerland.