



## CCD COP-6 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2003

In the morning, delegates to COP-6 met in a Special High Level Segment to hear statements from Heads of State and Government, and in the afternoon convened in a round table to exchange views on the theme of "The UNCCD as a tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as they relate to poverty eradication and food security." Informal consultations on the programme and budget, the outcomes of the WSSD, and Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) were also held in the afternoon.

### SPECIAL HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT

COP-6 President Simeón Negrín opened the Special High Level Segment. Many speakers welcomed the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the CCD, stressed the need to mobilize financial and technical resources, including technology transfer and capacity building, and noted the importance of implementing NAPs. Others identified globalization and neoliberal policies, in particular agricultural subsidies, the IMF and WTO, as major obstacles to eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development in developing countries. Other issues raised in the statements included the: importance of the Millennium Development Goals; outcomes of the WSSD; need to address the causes of land degradation and desertification in Africa; and involvement of civil society and local communities.

In his opening statement, Cuba's President Fidel Castro Ruz emphasized the importance of education and public awareness in sustainable development and poverty eradication. Presenting examples of Cuba's literacy and education campaigns, he stressed that the most urgent task is to build universal awareness among adults and children. CCD Executive Secretary Arba Hamma Diallo highlighted the CCD as an important multilateral process that transcends the interests of any country. He said that the CCD is a vehicle to ensure sustainable development for people living in fragile environments. Ibrahim Gambari, representative of the UN Secretary-General, underscored the importance of the CCD, the most broad-based multilateral treaty in the area of sustainable development, in efforts to fight rural poverty and achieve food security.

Blaise Compaoré, President of the Republic of Burkina Faso, highlighted the need to use the CCD to improve the living standards of the poor. He said that despite the "waning" of the enthusiasm that had "sparked" the CCD negotiations, it is possible to combat desertification by sustaining efforts. He called for the mainstreaming of desertification into multilateral and bilateral cooperation in order to support resource mobilization.

Alhaji Yahya Jemus Junkung Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, noted that the unsustainable use of natural resources leads to further poverty. Stating that poverty, environmental degradation, and unsustainable consumption patterns impact all countries, he said that international cooperation should be regarded as an unifying element to address these challenges. Percival James Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica, stressed the need for a global partnership to effectively address desertification, and called on COP-6 to provide a clear understanding of how individual and joint actions, and funding promises will be realized. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, said COP-6 marked a turning point for the CCD. He noted that addressing land degradation requires countries to make substantial financial resources available from their national budgets.

Amadou Toumani Touré, President of the Republic of Mali, said that while the struggle against desertification is global, the countries of the Sahel are "at the heart of the battle." He pointed to the CCD's role in changing the international community's perception of desertification, noting that it is a complex development problem. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, called for adequate financing for the CCD. He underscored the need to promote awareness regarding the linkages between biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation. He noted advances achieved in Southern Africa in promoting the ideals of the CCD at subregional level by focusing on ecosystem management and poverty eradication. Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, highlighted the vulnerability of small island developing States (SIDS) to desertification and land degradation, and called for Parties to support the CCD's implementation in these countries.

Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, underscored the need for effective land management to avoid deforestation, overgrazing and the negative impacts of the tourism industry. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, reviewed the history of the CCD and noted that many previous COP decisions have not been implemented. He stressed the importance of political will to effectively address the causes of poverty and desertification. He also explained Venezuela's illiteracy eradication programme.

Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, expressed concern over the "unfulfillment" of promises made by developed countries to commit funds to improve the lives of the poor. He highlighted the Zimbabwean land reform programme. Jacob Zuma, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, called on the upcoming WTO negotiations in Cancún, Mexico, to make headway on the CCD's implementation. He suggested stronger linkages between NEPAD's Environment

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Initiative and the CCD, as well as between African countries, the GEF and UNEP. Amara Essy, Interim Chairperson of the African Union (AU), highlighted the initiatives of the AU Summit in Maputo, Mozambique, and underscored the role of the AU in assisting the CCD Secretariat in implementing programmes on desertification. MOROCCO, for the G-77/China, noted concern regarding the absence of long-term strategies to implement the CCD and of reliable means of implementation, in particular adequate financial resources, technology transfer, and capacity building. He stressed the importance of south-south, regional, and subregional cooperation as key elements in the CCD's implementation.

ITALY, for the EU, underscored the need to strengthen the role of science, research, and technology, and encouraged increased participation of all actors of civil society in combating desertification. He announced that the EU has launched an initiative with the objective to increase the absorption capacity for investment in sustainable land use, and to harness the strategic potential of the CCD for improving the livelihood of people in drylands. BELARUS, for the countries of the CCD's Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe, highlighted actions taken in the region since the Annex entered into force, including: identifying priority areas; establishing partnership agreements; building scientific, institutional and legislative capacity; and developing mechanisms for the CCD's implementation. A representative of the NGO community highlighted the importance of GEF's small grants programme for supporting implementation of the CCD at the local level. She welcomed NGO participation in COP-6 deliberations, and urged Parties to ensure NGO participation on the Facilitation Committee.

#### ROUND TABLE

Round table Chair Fidel Castro Ruz said discussion will enable an open exchange on the theme, "The UNCCD as a tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as they relate to poverty eradication and food security." NAMIBIA underscored the importance of education to effectively combat poverty. He stressed south-south cooperation, especially in the economic field. SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES said that, although south-south cooperation is welcome, partnerships between poor and rich countries are necessary for an effective and prompt implementation of the CCD. He drew parallels between trade agreements and land degradation in the context of banana plantations and export. BURKINA FASO said the poor cannot participate in protecting the environment because their livelihoods are based on exploitative means. As measures to combat poverty, he highlighted food security, and education to promote respect for the environment.

MALI noted deforestation as a consequence of firewood collection. He stressed the "feminization" of poverty in Mali as a result of women representing more than half of the rural population. In the context of rural poverty, he expressed regret at the devaluation of cotton crops in the Sahel, and pointed to the upcoming WTO meeting in Cancún, with the hope that "conscience will win." LESOTHO highlighted land degradation in mountainous areas, which are fragile and have a slow recovery rate from human disturbance. He said environmental problems do not respect political boundaries, and urged Parties to implement the CCD.

JAMAICA noted the importance of the CCD for addressing land degradation and the particular situation of SIDS. He said SIDS are not seeking priority under the CCD at the expense of Africa, which he noted has "a clear and compelling case" for prioritization. A representative of the UN Secretary-General emphasized the priority placed by the CCD on promoting sustainable development and food security, poverty eradication, and attaining the Millen-

nium Development Goals. Noting the importance of NEPAD, he urged more investment in Africa. A representative of the Andean Parliament called for Parties to elaborate a statement reinforcing south-south cooperation, and to examine the establishment of an international environment court.

*Earth Negotiations Bulletin coverage of the round table ended at 8:45 pm.*

#### INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

**REGIONAL COORDINATION UNITS:** Delegates met in the afternoon to address the draft decision, submitted earlier by the facilitator of the consultations. The Secretariat also circulated a paper containing additional information on RCUs. Delegates agreed that yet more information was needed to consider the RCUs' feasibility. The group proceeded to drafting, with one delegation expressing preference toward elaborating a short decision on convening a workshop on the RCUs' terms of reference at COP-7.

**PROGRAMME AND BUDGET:** Informal consultations on the programme and budget continued in the afternoon, with the presentation of four scenarios on the Secretariat's budget. Following a question-and-answer session, the meeting was adjourned to allow for consultations by a regional group.

**OUTCOMES OF THE WSSD:** Informal consultations on the WSSD continued in the afternoon, with delegates discussing the draft decision proposed by the facilitator of the consultations. Delegates could not agree to the suggestion that the CCD Executive Secretary "actively" participate in sessions of the CSD, and to whether this should include "relevant" or "all" sessions. There was no agreement to a proposal by a regional group, encouraging Parties to ensure linkages between the JPOI and the CCD, with a developed country suggesting instead WSSD follow-up for CSD sessions where water is a major issue. The text regarding the WSSD's recognition that SIDS are a special case for environment and development remains bracketed.

#### IN THE CORRIDORS

The High Level Segment was at the center of attention of the 190 Parties to the CCD on Monday, not least through the lively exchange between Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, which raised high-profile international issues. A large number of participants applauded the strong sentiments expressed, including the focus on poverty, third world debt, education campaigns, and the destructive role of the market economy. However, some delegates wondered whether the leaders who came to Havana were using the COP for broader political visions, that went far beyond the topic of desertification.

#### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT:** A High Level Segment with an inter-agency panel will meet in Sala 1, from 9:00 am to 10:30 am and from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The segment will address the theme: "The UNCCD: A new opportunity for an enhanced framework of cooperation in ODA funding for the promotion of sustainable development in arid ecosystems."

**ROUND TABLE:** A round table meeting of Heads of State and Government will take place in Sala 3 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Delegates will address the theme of "The UNCCD as a tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as they relate to poverty eradication and food security."

**INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS:** Informal consultations will be held on RCUs, the outcomes of the WSSD, rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure, and the programme and budget.

Please consult the Journal and monitors for further information.