



SUMMARY OF THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 25 AUGUST - 6 SEPTEMBER 2003

The sixth Conference of the Parties (COP-6) 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) took place at the Palacio de Convenciones in Havana, Cuba, from 25 August to 6 September 2003. The COP was attended by 12 Heads of State and Government, approximately 170 Parties, five observer States, 33 UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations, as well as 147 non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

During the COP, Parties convened in informal consultations and plenary sessions of the Committee of the Whole (COW), Committee on Science and Technology (CST), and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), in order to prepare draft decisions for the approval by the COP. The COP also included two open dialogue sessions with NGOs and governments, and a High Level Special Segment, which adopted the "Havana Declaration of Heads of State."

Progress was made on a number of issues, including: the designation of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) as a financial mechanism of the CCD; activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies; enhancing the effectiveness of the CST; and follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The COP adopted 31 decisions, of which eight were developed in the CST and six in the CRIC.

COP-6 marked the CCD's transition from awareness raising to implementation. Among the issues marking the transition were the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism to the CCD and identification of criteria for the CRIC's COP-7 review. Two factors served as an additional impetus to making significant progress: the presence of Cuban President Fidel Castro, known for his ability to do "much with very little," and the first anniversary of the WSSD, which identified combating desertification as a tool for eradicating poverty.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CCD

The Convention to Combat Desertification is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation. The CCD was adopted on 17 June 1994, opened for signature in October 1994, and entered into force on 26 December 1996. The CCD currently has 190 Parties, with the recent ratifications by the Russian Federation (29 May 2003) and Lithuania (25 July 2003).

CONVENTION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE: The CCD recognizes the physical, biological and socioeconomic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer so that it is demand-driven, and the involvement of local communities in combating desertification and land degradation. 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 communities and NGOs.

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION: In 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 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

IN THIS ISSUE

A Brief History of the CCD	1
COP-6 Report	2
Plenary	3
High Level Special Segment	4
Open Dialogue Sessions	7
Committee of the Whole	7
Committee on Science and Technology	9
Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention	12
Fifth Round Table of Parliamentarians	13
Closing Plenary	13
A Brief Analysis of COP-6	14
Things to Look For Before COP-7	16

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and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD). The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994, and drafted the CCD and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. A fifth annex for Central and Eastern Europe was elaborated and adopted during COP-4 in December 2000.

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 for 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 CCD, the Global Mechanism (GM), and the establishment of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

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 from 2-3 October. The COP-1 and CST-1 agendas consisted primarily of organizational matters. Delegates selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the CCD's Permanent Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the organization to administer the GM. 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: COP-2 met in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 November to 11 December 1998. The CST met in parallel with the COP from 1-4 December. Delegates approved arrangements for the institutional linkage between the CCD 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 rule 47 on majority voting in the absence of consensus. Central and Eastern 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 (MOU) between the COP and IFAD regarding the GM, and the G-77/China proposal to establish a Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

COP-3: Parties met for COP-3 in Recife, Brazil, from 15-26 November 1999, with the CST meeting in parallel to the COP from 16-19 November. The COP approved the long-negotiated MOU regarding the GM. It decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze in depth the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes and to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the CCD. Delegates also agreed to continue consultations on the additional draft regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe, with a view to adopting it at COP-4. The COP also appointed an *ad hoc* panel on traditional knowledge and an *ad hoc* panel on early warning systems.

COP-4: COP-4 convened from 11-22 December 2000, in Bonn, Germany. The CST met from 12-15 December. The COP's notable achievements were the adoption of the fifth regional Annex for Central and Eastern Europe, commencement of work by the *ad hoc* working group to review CCD implementation, initiation of the consideration of modalities for the establishment of the CRIC, submission of proposals to improve the work of the CST, and the adoption of a decision on the GEF Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support to the CCD's implementation.

COP-5: COP-5 met from 1-13 October 2001, in Geneva, Switzerland, and the CST met in parallel from 2-5 October. The COP focused on setting the modalities of work for the two-year interval before COP-6. Progress was made in a number of areas, most notably, in the establishment of the CRIC, identification of modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and in the enhancement of the CCD's financial base following strong support for a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

CRIC-1: The first meeting of the CRIC was held at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002. The CRIC was established in accordance with decision 1/COP.5 to regularly review the implementation of the CCD, draw conclusions, and propose concrete recommendations to the COP on further implementation steps. CRIC-1 considered presentations from the five CCD regions, addressing the seven thematic issues under review:

- participatory processes involving civil society, NGOs and community-based organizations;
- legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements;
- linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies;
- measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land, drought and desertification monitoring and assessment;
- early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought;
- access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how; and
- resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements.

The meeting also considered information on financial mechanisms in support of the CCD's implementation, advice provided by the CST and the GM, and the Secretariat's report on actions aimed at strengthening the relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations.

CRIC-1 adopted recommendations on the programme of work for CRIC-2, noting that CRIC sessions held during the ordinary sessions of the COP will: consider the comprehensive report of the intersessional session; review the policies, operational modalities and activities of the GM; review reports prepared by the Secretariat on the execution of its functions; and consider reports on collaboration with the GEF.

COP-6 REPORT

The sixth Conference of the Parties to the CCD (COP-6) convened on Monday, 25 August, with a welcoming ceremony followed by the opening plenary. Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, President of Cuba's National Assembly, welcomed participants and expressed hope that the outcomes of COP-6 would be marked not only by good intentions, but also by concrete commitments. He noted that despite a "very obvious ecological debt," there are few



commitments on the part of developed countries to comply with their responsibilities under Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration on common but differentiated responsibilities.

CCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo highlighted the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and other processes that have “converged” to provide Parties with “the building blocks of a credible implementation process.” He singled out the importance of the GEF becoming a financial mechanism of the CCD.

COP-5 President Charles Bassett (Canada) formally opened COP-6 and requested the observation of a minute of silence for Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special UN Representative to Iraq, and other UN staff members who lost their lives in the attack on the UN office in Iraq on 19 August 2003. He emphasized the need to shift from policy advocacy and institution building to implementation, and noted that political will should result in the integration of desertification issues with broader development planning so that national and international resources could be accessed and used more effectively.

Delegates elected by acclamation Rosa Elena Simeón Negrín, Cuba’s Minister for Science, Technology and the Environment, as President of COP-6. President Simeón Negrín expressed hope that COP-6 would make real progress towards creating a better world, and emphasized that the present unsustainable consumption patterns, especially in the developed world, must be reversed.

Executive Secretary Diallo noted that COP-6 provides the context to assess the progress of implementing the CCD, and expressed hope that Parties will take appropriate measures to translate into action the political commitment to address desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

Parties adopted the agenda (ICCD/COP(6)/1) with an oral amendment from the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) requesting the inclusion of Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) as a separate agenda item.

Regional groups nominated, and the Plenary elected by acclamation, nine Vice Presidents, a Rapporteur and a CST Chair to serve with the President as Bureau Members. The following delegates were elected: on behalf of the African Group, Mohammed Arrouchi (Morocco) and Bongani Masuku (Swaziland); for the Asian Group, Yi Xianliang (China) and Saad Al Numeiry (United Arab Emirates); for the Central and Eastern European Group, Vladimir Savchenko (Belarus) and Dóra Kulauzov (Hungary); and for the Latin American and Caribbean Group, Ana María Hernández Salgar (Colombia). Anna Marie Skjold (Norway) was elected as the Vice-President-cum-Rapporteur on behalf of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). Ricardo Valentini (Italy), nominated by WEOG, was elected, as CST Chair.

President Simeón Negrín requested and Parties agreed to establish a Committee of the Whole (COW) to address outstanding issues and recommend decisions for adoption by the COP. Parties elected Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) as Chair of the COW and as an *ex officio* member of the Bureau.

President Simeón Negrín said the current CRIC Chair, Rogatien Biao (Benin) would not participate in COP-6 due to ministerial responsibilities, and that Mohamed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth (Mauritania) had been selected as a replacement.

Parties also approved the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations proposed for accreditation to the COP, as listed in Annex I and II of the document ICCD/COP(6)/9/Add.1

PLENARY

OPENING STATEMENTS: Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underscored the importance of RCUs to assist in implementing the CCD, and the GEF’s offer to become one of the CCD’s financial mechanisms. He urged renewed support from the GM’s partners.

Italy, on behalf of the European Union, noted that the CCD is an important tool to assist in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Noting that the CCD Secretariat’s budget cannot be exempt from the “financial reality faced by the world,” he said there is a need for more transparency, justification of all expenses, and more information on the Secretariat’s sources of income and savings.

Armenia, for the Central and Eastern European Group, highlighted the importance of implementing the CCD through regional and subregional cooperation. He stressed that no countries are immune to the natural process of desertification and called on COP-6 to make an important contribution to the common cause of combating desertification.

Syria, for the Asian Group, identified the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the CCD as a turning point in the implementation of the CCD. Swaziland, for the African Group, said that the review of the policies and activities of the GM should result in a renewed and delivery-oriented institution. Chile, for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), highlighted the importance of addressing land degradation in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and expressed hope that the GEF will become an effective mechanism to support the CCD’s implementation.

UNESCO highlighted its work in promoting capacity building and environmental education programmes. FAO stressed combating land degradation as a prerequisite for increasing food security. UNDP underscored the CCD as an important tool for achieving the MDGs relating to alleviating poverty, eradicating hunger, and ensuring sustainable development. The World Food Programme highlighted the importance of improving food security and livelihoods of people living in degraded areas. A representative of the NGO community suggested that Parties’ military expenditures be channeled to a UN fund, and a tax on international financial transactions be established.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIR OF THE CRIC: In the COP Plenary on Wednesday, 3 September, President Simeón Negrín noted that Mohammed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth (Mauritania) had been nominated for the position of the new CRIC Chair by the African Group. Canada, for WEOG, nominated Annemarie Watt (Australia). Noting two candidates and no consensus, President Simeón Negrín suspended the Plenary to allow for consultation among regional groups.

On Friday, 5 September, President Simeón Negrín said an agreement had been reached. She said the nomination of the African Group had been accepted, and that COP-6 would initiate a rotation process between regional groups. The EU requested the suspension of the Plenary pending the conclusion of the ongoing informal consultations on the programme and budget. President Simeón Negrín said reaching consensus had been a lengthy process, and the COP adopted the nominee. The EU then requested a discussion at COP-7 on the rules of procedure of the CRIC in connection with the principle of rotation between regional groups for the election of the Chair, and that this concern is reflected in the report of the meeting. He also asked the President to facilitate



consultations between regional groups “well in advance” of COP-7. Nigeria and Syria underscored their support for CRIC Chair El Ghaouth.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CRIC-3: On Friday, 5 September, Parties discussed the draft decision on the date and venue of the third session of the CRIC. The EU noted a proposal to change the text to read that the session “should last no more than five working days.” Supported by the US and Switzerland, he noted budgetary constraints and the fact that the session would only focus on one of the five regional groups as reasons for holding a shorter session than proposed in the draft decision. Tunisia said that the dates set out in the draft decision fall during Ramadan, and requested a change of dates. Executive Secretary Diallo suggested that the decision be left to the Bureau, and several Parties supported his proposal. The COP adopted the decision, as amended.

Final Decision: In the final decision (ICCD/COP(6)/L.26), the COP decides that CRIC-3 should be held in Bonn, Germany, in the fall of 2004, and requests the Bureau to undertake consultations to set the dates.

AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS: Implementation, arbitration and conciliation procedures: On Wednesday and Thursday, 3-4 September, the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts (AHGE) met in informal consultations, facilitated by Javad Amin-Mansour (Iran), to discuss questions on implementation, arbitration and conciliation procedures, including the draft decision. The final decision on the matter was adopted by the COP on Friday, 5 September.

In the informal discussions, some developing and developed countries said Article 27 on implementation does not include a compliance mechanism, and suggested that Parties focus on facilitating implementation rather than sanctions for non-compliance. Many developed countries noted that delegates should be careful not to duplicate work relating to the mechanisms under the CRIC and the CST. The US said it does not accept compulsory arbitration, but suggested that the Secretariat compile views submitted by the Parties. Some developed countries opposed a request that the CCD Secretariat prepare a document noting the implementation regimes of other conventions.

Final Decision: In the COP decision on the AHGE (ICCD/COP(6)/L.22) the COP requests, *inter alia*, the AHGE to reconvene at COP-7 and the CCD Secretariat to prepare a new working document based on the submissions of Parties relating to mechanisms for implementing the CCD. The COP reconvenes the AHGE to examine and recommend annexes for arbitration procedures and for conciliation at COP-7. It invites Parties and interested organizations to communicate their views on this issue, and the CCD Secretariat to prepare a new document containing a compilation of the views and an updated version of the annexes to reflect such views.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR COP-7: This decision was discussed and adopted in the closing Plenary on Friday, September 5. The EU proposed several amendments, including a comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat. Tunisia proposed an amendment on support to the GM.

Final Decision: In the decision on the programme of work for COP-7 (ICCD/COP(6)/L.16), the COP decides to include the following items in the COP-7 agenda:

- programme and budget for 2006-2007;
- reviews of the implementation of the CCD and its institutional arrangements, of the CST report, and of the relationships with other conventions and organizations;

- outcome of the WSSD;
- RCUs;
- rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure;
- the CCD’s implementation in accordance with Article 27 on mechanisms and instruments for implementation;
- arbitration and conciliation procedures;
- interactive dialogue sessions with relevant stakeholders;
- comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat; and
- consideration of progress made by the GM in mobilizing financial resources to support CCD implementation, in particular, NAPs.

DATE AND VENUE OF COP-7: The COP adopted the decision on the date and venue of COP-7 without discussion on Saturday, 6 September.

Final Decision: The final decision (ICCD/COP(6)/L.25), states that COP-7 shall be held from 17-28 October 2005, in Bonn, Germany, if no Party, prior to 15 January 2005, offers to host the session and meet the additional cost.

HIGH LEVEL SPECIAL SEGMENT

The High Level Special Segment took place from Monday to Wednesday, 1-3 September. On Monday, Heads of State and Government, regional organizations, and NGOs made statements in Plenary, followed by a Heads of State round table meeting on Monday and Tuesday, which concluded with the adoption of the “Havana Declaration.” The round table addressed the theme: “The UNCCD as a tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as they relate to poverty eradication and food security.” On Tuesday and Wednesday, delegates convened for an inter-agency panel, followed by an interactive dialogue of ministers to discuss 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.” The inter-agency panel was moderated by Ian Johnson, Vice-President of the World Bank, and the interactive dialogue of ministers was facilitated by Pierre Marc Johnson (Canada). Delegates elected Anne Marie Skjold as the rapporteur of the interactive dialogue. On Wednesday, the COP convened throughout the day to hear statements by the Heads of delegation, UN agencies and international organizations. In the final plenary on Friday, 5 September, the COP adopted a decision taking note of the Havana Declaration and including the Declaration as an annex to the COP-6 report (ICCD/COP(6)/L.31).

OPENING STATEMENTS BY HEADS OF STATE: On Monday, 1 September, COP-6 President Simeón Negrín opened the High Level Special 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, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) as major obstacles to eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development in developing countries. Other issues raised included: implementing the MDGs and WSSD; addressing the causes of land degradation and desertification in Africa; and involving civil society and local communities.

In his opening statement, Cuban 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.

Executive Secretary Diallo highlighted the CCD as an important multilateral process that transcends the interests of any country. He said that the CCD is a vehicle for ensuring sustainable development for people living in fragile environments.

Ibrahim Gambari, representative of the UN Secretary-General, underscored the importance of the CCD as the most broad-based multilateral treaty in the area of sustainable development, and its 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, and called for mainstreaming desertification into multilateral and bilateral cooperation in order to support resource mobilization.

Alhaji Yahya Jemus Junkung Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, stated that poverty, environmental degradation, and unsustainable consumption patterns impact all countries, and urged international cooperation as a 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 and that countries should 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."

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.

Keith C. Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, highlighted the vulnerability SIDS to desertification and land degradation, and called for Parties to support the CCD's implementation in such 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.

Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, expressed concern over the "unfulfilled" promises made by developed countries to commit funds to improve the living standards of the poor.

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.

Amara Essy, Interim Chairperson of the African Union (AU), underscored the role of the AU in assisting the CCD Secretariat in implementing programmes on desertification.

STATEMENTS BY HEADS OF DELEGATIONS AND NGOS: Morocco, on behalf of 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.

Italy, on behalf of 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.

Belarus, for Central and Eastern Europe, highlighted actions taken in the region since Annex V entered into force, including: identifying priority areas; establishing partnership agreements; building scientific, institutional and legislative capacity; and developing mechanisms for the CCD's implementation.

Sina Maiga Damba, Association de Formation et d'Appui au Développement, on behalf of the NGO community, welcomed civil society participation in the COP-6 deliberations, and urged Parties to ensure NGO participation in the Facilitation Committee.

HEADS OF STATE ROUND TABLE: During the round table discussion on "The UNCCD as a tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as they relate to poverty eradication and food security," several speakers reiterated the importance of education and literacy campaigns, south-south cooperation, official development assistance (ODA) flows, and equitable global trade structures.

Namibia underscored the importance of education to effectively combat poverty and stressed south-south cooperation. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines said partnerships between poor and rich countries are necessary for an effective and prompt implementation of the CCD. Burkina Faso said the poor cannot participate in protecting the environment because their livelihoods are based on exploitative means.

Mali stressed the "feminization" of poverty in his country as a result of women representing more than half of the rural population. Lesotho 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. South Africa underlined the importance of addressing peace and security.

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 MDGs. A representative of the Andean Parliament called for Parties to elaborate a statement reinforcing south-south cooperation.

Executive Secretary Diallo then presented the Havana Declaration for adoption, which was signed by the Presidents of Cuba, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria; Prime Ministers of Jamaica, Lesotho, Mali, Namibia, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; the Deputy President of South Africa; the Presidents of the National Assembly of Cape Verde and the Andean Parliament; the Interim Chairperson of the African Union; and the Minister of State of Benin.

Havana Declaration: The Havana Declaration commits governments to pursue peace, sustainable development, multilateralism, and comply with international law. It notes that people living in affected areas need to be at the center of all programmes to combat desertification, and urges the improvement of economic, social and environmental conditions of the poor. It calls on the WTO to note the impacts that agriculture and trade subsidies have



on rural development and desertification, and to consider phasing them out. It invites all affected Parties to integrate the CCD in national strategies for sustainable development, and include programmes to combat desertification in policies on land, water, rural development, forests, energy, and education and culture.

INTER-AGENCY PANEL: The inter-agency panel explored the theme of "The UNCCD: A new opportunity for an enhanced framework of cooperation in ODA funding for the promotion of sustainable development in arid ecosystems." Hamdallah Zedan, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Executive Secretary, stressed synergies among the three Rio conventions, and outlined current work by the CBD Secretariat on dryland biodiversity. Koos Richelle, Director-General for Development of the European Commission, addressed the importance of integrating NAPs into a single national strategy. Len Good, GEF CEO, underlined the GEF's strong commitment to the CCD's implementation, with US\$500 million earmarked over the next three years for this purpose. Jack Wilkinson, President of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, called for the involvement of farmers in decision-making. IFAD President Lennart Båge emphasized the importance of integrating desertification issues into national development plans and of working on indicators for desertification.

Abdoulie Janneh, UNDP Assistant Administrator, called for enhancing women's livelihoods in rural areas in order to achieve the MDGs and combat desertification. Shafqat Kakakhel, UNEP's Deputy Executive Director, said desertification is a multidimensional challenge requiring joint efforts from all Parties and agencies. Pekka Patosaari, Head of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), noted that the work of the UNFF and CCD are complementary, and urged enhancing cooperation and synergies between the two Secretariats. Joke Waller-Hunter, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Executive Secretary, observed that the adverse effects of climate change worsen desertification and that measures to promote adaptation to climate change can alleviate poverty and contribute to combating desertification.

In the subsequent discussion, ministers highlighted the need for enhancing partnerships, assessing the quality and methodology of projects, increasing funding, and addressing the vulnerability of SIDS. Burkina Faso stressed that the CCD is the ideal framework for assisting the poor. Botswana called on the Panel to identify measures to sustainably utilize wildlife and land, and for the safeguarding of human lives. South Africa called for increased cooperation among MEAs and multilateral agencies, and expressed regret at the Panel's gender imbalance. Cuba stressed the scope for south-south cooperation and emphasized the need for national-level capacity to interpret scientific and technical data. Cameroon called on participants to draw on the lessons from countries experiencing desertification and land degradation when identifying solutions. Pakistan suggested that funds be equally distributed among regions, and called on the GEF to provide detailed information on the amounts available, and on requirements for preparing programmes and projects. Bangladesh called for increased ODA for capacity building and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. Zambia requested that the World Bank and IFAD clarify available financing for programmes that support sustainable livelihoods and food security, particularly in rural areas, which do not attract mainstream funding. Moderator Ian Johnson closed the panel debate by saying that agencies will address country-specific issues informally.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE OF MINISTERS: Following the presentations by the inter-agency panel, the moderator invited several ministers to react. Numerous speakers welcomed: the WSSD's affirmation of the CCD as an instrument to combat poverty and the commitments made by developed countries in the Monterrey Consensus to increase donor contributions; and emphasized the importance of synergies and mainstreaming desertification and land degradation and the importance of the GEF in financing projects on desertification and land degradation.

Barbados underscored the absence of funding as the most important reason for insufficient action to carry forward the agenda for the mitigation and resolution of "environmental threats." She pointed to long project cycles and complicated prequalification criteria as obstacles to project delivery. Pakistan stressed the need for close collaboration between development agencies and developing countries. He said projects need to be prepared in consultation with developing countries. The US said implementation must be country- rather than donor-driven, and underscored the active participation of stakeholders, including NGOs, women and farmers' organizations. On finance, he noted that implementation must attract private sector investment from both foreign and domestic sources, which can contribute to co-financing, and to raising the productivity of women and men in eradicating poverty.

Brazil stressed the importance of the participation of civil society to combat social inequalities. Canada underscored the importance of financing real projects rather than investing in administrative infrastructure. He said funding for combating desertification and land degradation will increase only if these issues become national priorities of affected countries. Gambia stressed the loss in real value of ODA due to conditionality, and urged a standardization of the GEF and implementing agencies' procedures.

STATEMENTS BY HEADS OF DELEGATION, UN AGENCIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: Following conclusion of the interactive dialogue of ministers, COP President Simeón Negrín invited statements by Heads of delegation, UN agencies and international organizations.

Mozambique highlighted the lack of institutional capacity and financial resources, and limited participation of local communities and NGOs. Jordan, China and Syria urged technology transfer. Zambia noted conditionality placed on aid. Timor Leste said it is designing policies with the participation of stakeholders, coupled with enhancing food security, and generating rural employment. Botswana urged Parties to approve the budget and invited those Parties that have not yet paid their contributions to do so. China and Chile called on developed countries to provide new and additional resources to the GEF.

Uganda called on the GM to increase its efforts in assisting countries to secure the required co-financing, and Pakistan said the GM should work with developed countries to mobilize resources, such as private capital, foreign direct investment, and carbon finance. Tajikistan, for Central Asia, announced the adoption of the subregional action programme. Vanuatu, for the Pacific Island States, requested COP-6 to amend Article I of the Regional Implementation Annex for "Asia" to read "Asia Pacific."

Ghana proposed that financial assistance be offered to developing countries to enable them to document and disseminate traditional knowledge related to environmental protection. IFAD, for the GM's Facilitation Committee, said that its member organizations are committed to, *inter alia*, integrating NAP and SRAP



priorities into their own country and regional strategies. The United Arab Emirates underscored its support for a "comprehensive agriculture renaissance."

France emphasized the importance of work "on the ground" and regional cooperation activities within existing institutions. Argentina underscored the necessity of international cooperation. Iran noted the lack of adequate funds, political will, and appropriate technology. Germany said the implementation process should be country-driven and underscored long-lasting partnerships between donors and affected countries.

Japan called for transparent and cost effective operation of the Secretariat and GM. The Netherlands said the CCD will be an important framework for ODA cooperation if the national and regional policies and programmes are merged with those on biodiversity and climate change. Palestine addressed the impact of conflict and occupation of territories on land degradation and desertification.

Israel stressed synergies for supporting efforts to achieve sustainable development of drylands. India stressed empowerment of women. Bahamas said that the GEF executing agencies should consider vulnerability indices in determining the eligibility for financial and technical assistance. The Russian Federation underscored the importance of the Regional Annex for Central and Eastern Europe. The Ramsar Convention Secretariat noted the designation of 26 new Ramsar sites in semi arid-zones in Africa. The IUCN said the COP should adopt an ecosystem approach to operationalize the CCD's work programme, and called on Parties to address the implementation of NAPs along with CBD's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and the UNFCCC's National Communications and National Adaptation Programmes of Action.

OPEN DIALOGUE SESSIONS

Two open dialogue sessions (ODS), presided over by the COP-6 President, were held on Friday, 29 August, and Thursday, 4 September. Each session began with a series of presentations, which were followed by discussions among NGO representatives, delegates and other participants.

The first ODS, moderated by Juan Luis Mérega, Fundación del Sur, addressed water resources management. Florent Ouedraogo, Association des Volontaires pour le Développement (Burkina Faso), addressed the application of low-pressure irrigation. Tanvir Arif, SCOPE, (Pakistan), described a water harvesting project. Clement Ouedraogo, Eau Vive (Burkina Faso), presented a case study on the problems of water extraction systems and their rehabilitation. Patrice Burger, French NGO Working Group on Desertification, highlighted water demand issues in the Mediterranean region. Mounir Bencharig, AREA-ED (Algeria) addressed measures to protect water resources in Algeria's oases. Paula Duarte, Articulação do Semi-Árido (Brazil), identified activities to promote water access to communities in semi-arid areas.

In the subsequent discussion, France, Uganda and Israel highlighted transboundary water resources, Mauritania stressed the relationship between the CCD and the Ramsar Convention, and Burkina Faso and Niger highlighted the importance of drip irrigation. President Simeón Negrín said efforts to improve water management must be enhanced and noted the value of including NGOs in this process.

The second ODS focused on the themes of agroforestry and nomad pastoralism, and was moderated by Tahirou Diao (Sahel Defis/Djomga 21). Evelyn Chavez, Agroforestry and Traditional Knowledge in Central America (Costa Rica) addressed agroforestry and agroecology in Central America. George Bright Awudi, Friends of the Earth-Ghana, highlighted tree planting and its relationship to combating desertification and poverty alleviation. Khukmatullo Akmadov, Man and Nature (Tajikistan), outlined afforestation projects in Central Asia. Khadija Razavi, Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment (Iran), addressed the sustainability of biodiversity and livelihoods for mobile pastoralist communities in Iran. Facho Balam, APPE (Chad), focused on causes and consequences of pastoralism. Alawiyya Jamal, Sudanese Environmental Conservation, addressed dryland projects in Um Jawasir, Sudan.

In the discussion, the Dryland Coordination Group (Mali) encouraged regional workshops to share experiences. The International Central Asian Biodiversity Institute (Uzbekistan), Cape Verde and Ethiopia highlighted the dangers of introducing exotic species as part of agroforestry. On pastoralism, Naturama (Burkina Faso) requested more information on land tenure issues regarding equity and security, Switzerland stressed the importance of traditional pastoral systems, and Earthaction International (Chile) called on the COP and relevant agencies to support initiatives on collecting, documenting, and systematizing experiences gained by civil society.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Committee of the Whole (COW), chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria), commenced its work on Tuesday, 26 August, and concluded early Saturday morning, 6 September, holding six formal meetings and a number of informal consultations. The informal groups' facilitators presented their final reports to the COW on Friday, 5 September. The COW approved the draft decisions and presented them to the COP plenary for formal adoption. The COW addressed the following agenda items: programme and budget; additional procedures or mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the CCD's implementation (the CRIC review criteria); activities for promoting and strengthening relations with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies (synergies); regional coordination units (RCUs); the outcomes of the WSSD; rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure; programme of work of COP-7; and any other matter deemed appropriate.

Two informal groups were established: one on the programme and budget, facilitated by John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), and the other on RCUs, facilitated by Dagmar Kubínová (Czech Republic).

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: The Secretariat's programme and budget for the biennium 2004-5 was addressed in the opening COW plenary on Tuesday, 26 August, and in informal consultations chaired by John Ashe.

In the opening COW plenary, JUSSCANNZ, identified several concerns regarding the biennium budget, including that the Secretariat provide an updated table highlighting the status of contributions, the indicative scale of contributions, and an organizational chart reflecting the institutional linkages between the six decentralized offices and Secretariat headquarters. Regarding the working and operating reserves and overheads, he said that the information provided in the budget document is not clear, and that information



on the costs of the GM is incomplete. The G-77/China stressed that the guiding principle on the budget should be how to render the work of the Secretariat more effective. The EU said the budget should be based on four overarching criteria: facilitation of the CCD's implementation; affordability; coherence with CRIC and CST decisions; and transparency and clarity. He also proposed that COP-6 direct the Secretariat to investigate the advantages and institutional implications of adopting the Euro as the budget's currency.

Beginning on Wednesday, 27 August, informal consultations took place on a daily basis, often late into the night, in an effort to reach a compromise on an acceptable budget increase. In the informal consultations, delegates addressed several issues related to explanations provided by the Secretariat and GM to questions posed by JUSSCANNZ and the EU, including: voluntary contributions and the scale of contributions; working capital reserve; staffing increases; programme support costs; currency fluctuations between the Euro and the US dollar; RCUs; the review of the Secretariat's activities, and recommendations emanating from the UN auditors' report. Following question-and-answer sessions a number of contentious issues remained, including: a reference to text adapted from a CBD decision addressing sanctions for Parties in arrears for more than two years; the percentage increase of the Secretariat's budget, ranging from 3-10%; the distribution of the budget between the staffing, implementation and the functions of the GM; and the fiscal discipline, transparency and accountability of the Secretariat in preparing the budget and executing its work.

Late night negotiations and numerous bilateral meetings based on Chair Ashe's draft decision were held on Thursday and Friday, 4-5 September, and a final decision on the programme and budget was adopted in the COP Plenary early Saturday morning, 6 September. Following the adoption of the decision by the COP Plenary, Canada noted concern with the process leading to the budget decision. She said that the COP and the Executive Secretary must address issues of accountability, transparency and effectiveness in a more serious manner at the next COP if Parties are expected to continue to provide support. She stressed that Canada was reluctant to increase expenditures on administration and expressed preference for supporting concrete efforts and projects to combat desertification instead.

Final Decision: In the decision on the programme and budget (ICCD/COP(6)/L.30/Rev.1), the COP decides that the programme and budget for the biennium 2004-5 shall amount to US\$17,049,000 and the working capital reserve will be maintained at 8.3% of the estimated expenditures, including overhead charges of the core budget. The COP also decides that a comprehensive review of the Secretariat's activities will be undertaken by the UN's Joint Inspection Unit, and requests the COP Bureau to develop terms of reference, by 1 June 2004, for this purpose. It also notes that the review should be based on: coherence and implementation of relevant COP decisions; structural implications of the Secretariat's evolving role; appropriate division of labor between the Secretariat and GM; and how further improvements in the budget presentation could increase transparency.

REGIONAL COORDINATION UNITS: This item was taken up in the COW on Friday, 29 August, and in informal consultations. The informal group on RCUs met continuously from the afternoon of Friday, 29 August, until finalizing the draft decision in the evening of Thursday, 4 September.

A large number of Parties, in particular from the G-77/China, welcomed the work done by the three existing RCUs in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and commended the Secretariat's proposal to strengthen them. The EU and JUSSCANNZ, while supporting regional coordination, emphasized the need to avoid duplication and called for a clear definition of their terms of reference. Suggestions were also made to establish RCUs in other regions. Several delegations requested more time and information to study the issue.

In the informal consultations, Parties discussed in-depth the added value of RCUs, with the EU and the US voicing concerns about the possibility of duplication and rising costs, which may be avoided if existing mechanisms are employed to perform the same function. The G-77/China noted that the mandate of the RCUs was different from the terms of reference of existing regional organizations, and called for a sound financial basis for the existing RCUs. He argued that the RCUs perform a useful function, and pressed for including the salaries of the regional coordinators and a secretary under the CCD Secretariat's core budget. More information was requested from the Secretariat on the operation of the three existing RCUs. The view prevailed that the feasibility of the RCUs must be established after a thorough study of all aspects of the issue. The Parties negotiated on the basis of a composite draft decision provided by the facilitator, incorporating text offered by the EU, US and G-77/China.

Final Decision: In the decision on RCUs (ICCD/COP(6)/L.21/Rev.1), the COP recognizes the potential of the RCUs and appreciates their efforts in assisting programmes and networks in respective regions. It invites Parties, the RCUs, GM and other relevant regional and subregional entities to submit views before 1 January 2004, on best arrangements to strengthen regional coordination, including the rationale, modalities, costs, feasibility and terms of reference of the RCUs. It requests the Secretariat to facilitate a costed feasibility study on all aspects of regional coordination, particularly on how to make best use of the existing RCUs. The study will be circulated by 1 August 2004, when the COP Bureau will initiate consultations among the regional groups, and place the issue on its regular agenda. Parties are encouraged to consult at meetings held prior to COP-7. Hosting organizations are invited to continue supporting the operating costs of the existing RCUs, and developed countries and agencies are encouraged to continue contributing to the Supplementary Fund. Funding, including the salaries for the existing RCU posts, will continue to be drawn from the Supplementary Fund until the item is considered at COP-7. COP-7 is invited to decide on the role of RCUs and their related institutional and budgetary arrangements.

FOLLOW-UP TO REGIONAL MEETINGS: The item on the follow-up to the regional meetings held in preparation for COP-6 was taken up in an informal group, facilitated by COW Chair Anaedu, on Tuesday, 2 September. The COP adopted the decision on Friday, 5 September. Among the difficulties encountered by the group was a paragraph in the draft decision concerning access of SIDS to the GEF's financial resources.

Final Decision: In the decision on follow-up to regional meetings (ICCD/COP(6)/L.18), the COP welcomes the outcomes of various preparatory meetings, and invites Parties and agencies to continue voluntarily contributing to activities relating to the implementation of action programmes. It also invites the GEF to develop



simplified procedures addressing the needs of different country groups, in particular Africa and SIDS, to facilitate their access to financial resources.

SYNERGIES: The item on the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies, was addressed by Parties in an informal group from Tuesday to Thursday, 2-4 September. A final decision was adopted in Plenary on Friday, 5 September.

There was debate on text in the draft decision on involving Parties in the joint work programme of the CCD and the CBD on the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands, and on encouraging Parties to focus on integrated and sustainable ecosystem programmes and projects, to fully benefit from synergies.

Final Decision: In the decision on synergies (ICCD/COP(6)/L.19/Rev.1), the COP recalls that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation encouraged the three Rio conventions to explore and enhance synergies. It welcomes the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the CCD and the Convention on Migratory Species, the joint work programme with the CBD on the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands, and encourages the Joint Liaison Group on the three Rio conventions to identify areas for joint activities. Other relevant conventions and organizations, including the GEF, are encouraged to promote synergistic initiatives to foster collaboration with the CCD. The COP requests the Executive Secretary, with the UNFF, the UNFCCC and the CBD, to promote activities with Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) for a joint approach on forests, and invites the GEF and calls on the CRIC, CST and GM to give due consideration to the social needs of the LFCCs. The decision encourages Parties to focus their implementation of the CCD on integrated, sustainable ecosystem-based activities in order to fully benefit from synergies.

OUTCOMES OF THE WSSD: The COW took up the item on the outcomes of the WSSD on Wednesday, 27 August, and in informal consultations throughout the session. The decision was adopted by the COP on Friday, 5 September.

The G-77/China called for effective synergies between the CCD and UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) Secretariats, so that they enter into a dialogue to prepare for the discussion on desertification in the CSD work cycle for 2008-2009. Regional and interest groups stressed that work under the CCD should take into account the WSSD's outcomes and the Millennium Declaration. The African Group, supported by many others, emphasized recognition by the WSSD of the CCD's role in fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development. The consultations addressed such questions as the special circumstances of SIDS. In addition, the EU proposed text on poverty that "results from land degradation," the reference to the "lack of substantial financial resources" for CCD implementation, and reference to the need for the CCD Executive Secretary to "actively" participate in the follow-up to the WSSD outcomes and in "relevant" sessions of the CSD.

Final Decision: In the final decision on the outcomes of the WSSD (ICCD/COP(6)/L.15/Rev.1), the COP welcomes recognition by the WSSD of the CCD as one of the tools for poverty eradication, and underlines the importance of the CCD's implementation for meeting the MDGs. The COP resolves to strengthen the implementation of the CCD in line with the outcome of the WSSD, including action to:

- mobilize adequate and predictable financial resources;
- formulate NAPs as priority tools;

- encourage the Secretariats of the Rio conventions to continue exploring and enhancing synergies;
- integrate measures to prevent and combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;
- provide affordable local access to information to improve monitoring and early warning; and
- improve the sustainability of grassland resources.

OUTSTANDING ITEMS: Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure: This item was considered by the COW on Wednesday, 27 August. The item was taken up on Tuesday, 2 September, by a small informal group, which debated a paper prepared, and later revised, by the facilitator, COW Chair Anaedu. The EU proposed postponing discussion of the matter until COP-7, since voting rules remain an outstanding issue in other international fora. In the course of further informal meetings convened to decide whether to address the issue in a substantive way at this COP, or to defer it to COP-7, participants agreed that Parties should make every effort to reach agreement on all matters of substance by consensus, with most expressing preference for a two-thirds majority vote on matters of substance in absence of a consensus. While the US suggested exploring the matter in order to give guidance to future negotiations, and refer it to the AHGE for consideration, other Parties were reluctant to engage in further substantive discussion. Brazil stressed that rule 47 was, in essence, a political issue and that other conventions have failed to resolve the same problem, and, supported by the EU and China, urged that the matter should be deferred to COP-7.

Final Decision: In the decision on rule 47 (ICCD/COP(6)/L.20) the COP decides to request the Secretariat to include the consideration of this outstanding rule of procedure in the COP-7 agenda.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The CST met from Tuesday to Friday, 26-29 August to address: the roster of independent experts; survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies; enhancing the usefulness and effectiveness of the CST; traditional knowledge; benchmarks and indicators; early warning systems; Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA); the CST work programme; future work programme of the CST; establishment of *ad hoc* panels; and other matters. On Wednesday, 27 August, informal groups met to discuss: the roster of independent experts; the survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies; and traditional knowledge. The CST approved its draft decisions on Thursday and Friday, 28 and 29 August, all of which were adopted by the COP on Wednesday, 3 September.

OPENING OF THE SESSION: Chair Ricardo Valentini (Italy) opened the first session of the CST on Tuesday, 26 August. He emphasized that the CST must produce policy-relevant advice and contribute to the CCD's implementation. Introducing the draft agenda, he stressed that the CST has an important role to play in increasing synergies between the CCD, UNFCCC and CBD, and suggested that the CST draw on relevant aspects of other conventions to improve its agenda. Colombia and Brazil suggested deferring consideration of the agenda item on traditional knowledge until COP-7. The Secretariat clarified that this matter was a standing agenda item. The agenda and the organization of work (ICCD/COP(6)/CST/1) were adopted without amendment.



Delegates elected the following Vice-Chairs: for the African Group, Moussa Hassane (Niger) was re-elected; for the Asian Group, Sapon Chomchan (Thailand); for the Central and Eastern European Group, Pavol Bielek (Slovakia); and for the Latin American and Caribbean Group, Julio Roberto Cucurriche Gómez (Guatemala). Bielek was elected as Rapporteur. On Wednesday, 27 August, Chair Valentini announced the resignation of Vice-Chair Hassane (Niger) and Parties elected Rigondja Georges (Gabon) as the new Vice-Chair for the African Group.

ROSTER OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS: On Tuesday, 26 August, the CST considered the Roster of Experts. An informal group met on Wednesday, 27 August, and on Thursday, 28 August, the CST approved the draft decision with minor textual amendments.

The Secretariat urged greater representation in some disciplines, such as political science, anthropology and sociology on the roster of experts. Participants requested information on how the roster is being used, and on ways of increasing NGO participation, updating experts' details, and improving gender balance. Cuba reported on the informal group's discussion regarding the maintenance and characteristics of the current roster of experts. He summarized the group's proposals for a draft decision, which include: reviewing the roster of experts; adopting new recommendations aiming at greater participation of local communities, NGOs and other segments of civil society; ensuring balanced gender and geographical representation; and establishing relationships between national focal points and the CCD Secretariat to periodically assess the work of the experts. The League of Arab States suggested that the CST coordinators rely more on the experts in the roster, and Kenya said the national focal points could assist in addressing gender and geographical imbalances. A representative of the NGO community welcomed the working group's suggestion to include experts representing NGOs, local communities, farmers, and women as this would facilitate the implementation of local-level projects.

Final Decision: In the decision on the roster of independent experts (ICCD/COP(6)/L.7), the COP encourages Parties to revise, update and propose new candidates for the roster to achieve better representation of all relevant disciplines, women and a more balanced geographical distribution of NGOs. The COP also invites Parties to report to the Secretariat on their use of the roster and the CST, through its Group of Experts, to fully utilize the roster to carry out the Group of Expert's work.

SURVEY AND EVALUATION OF EXISTING NETWORKS, INSTITUTIONS, AGENCIES AND BODIES: On Tuesday, 26 August, the CST addressed survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies, and met in an informal group on Wednesday, 27 August. The draft decision was approved by the CST on Thursday, 28 August with minor textual amendments.

South Africa, with others, commended the relevant project undertaken by UNEP and expressed interest in carrying it into its second phase. The EU and others acknowledged that it had not been possible to mobilize funding for the project.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(6)/L.9), the COP requests the GM and other funding agencies, in close collaboration with the CCD Secretariat, to mobilize additional resources for the survey, and invites Parties to make voluntary contributions. The

COP also requests the Secretariat to enter into contractual arrangements with UNEP for the second implementation phase of the survey.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE: The CST considered traditional knowledge from Wednesday to Friday, 27-29 August, with an informal group meeting in the evening of Wednesday, 27 August. The CST approved the draft decision on Friday, 29 August.

Italy provided an overview of its revised proposal for a network of institutions, bodies, and experts on traditional knowledge. Brazil, for the G-77/ China, with Chile, for GRULAC, and Canada, requested that this agenda item be deferred due to the late publication of the proposal. Colombia, supported by Brazil and Cuba, objected to addressing the proposal without considering prior informed consent and participation of indigenous and local communities. He stressed the need to: examine protection systems for traditional knowledge; harmonize the CCD's efforts with those undertaken under the WTO and CBD; and determine the kind of knowledge to be included in the network.

A representative from the NGO community called on delegates to take prompt action in light of the rapid loss of traditional knowledge. Saint Lucia emphasized the need for participation of traditional knowledge holders in this discussion. Italy clarified that its proposal presents a list of possible activities from which countries could select appropriate initiatives to increase the use and benefit of traditional knowledge. Delegates agreed to establish a group to elaborate a "roadmap" for addressing traditional knowledge. Chair Valentini later reported back that the informal group had agreed that the Secretariat would invite Parties to express their views on this issue, which will be discussed at COP-7. Colombia suggested that indigenous communities and relevant international organizations also be invited to submit their views. An NGO representative emphasized the need for updating the list of experts, including local experts that would enable an analysis of which traditional knowledge should be updated and which projects should be implemented.

Chair Valentini said the mandate should specify the need for an analysis on the possibility of organizing a network for traditional knowledge in the context of the CCD, without addressing the substance of the issue. GRULAC suggested that the draft decision invite Parties and relevant organizations to submit views, case studies, and lessons learned on how traditional knowledge can contribute to the CCD's objectives. Japan suggested adding a deadline for such submissions. An NGO representative proposed the addition of text to ensure adequate protection of the rights of traditional knowledge owners.

Final Decision: In the final decision on traditional knowledge (ICCD/COP(6)/L.13), the COP invites Parties through their national focal points to involve relevant governmental organizations and NGOs, research institutions and local and indigenous communities to formulate views on how traditional knowledge can contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the CCD, and to compile case studies and lessons learned on the management and protection of traditional knowledge. The COP requests the Secretariat to compile the submissions and report at CST-7.

BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS: The CST considered benchmarks and indicators on Wednesday and Thursday, 27-28 August. The draft decision was approved with minor textual amendments on Friday, 29 August.

During the deliberations, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) presented its report on monitoring and evaluation systems. Several Parties reported on their national efforts to develop bench-



marks and indicators. China and Cuba stressed the importance of practical and harmonized indicators, and Saint Lucia highlighted the needs of SIDS. A representative of the NGO community called on Parties to develop benchmarks for participation, and suggested the involvement of NGOs in designing benchmarks and indicators. Chair Valentini referred to the added value and visibility given to the CCD by work on benchmarks and indicators, and emphasized the need for a mechanism to facilitate experience sharing by Parties. He said that the Group of Experts will continue addressing the issue as part of its work programme. The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) said it had collaborated with OSS in the development of benchmarks and indicators, and requested this be reflected in the draft decision. Regarding technical, scientific, and financial contributions to the initiatives undertaken by developing country Parties, delegates agreed to language inviting Parties, international organizations, and interested private and public entities to contribute.

Final Decision: In the final decision on benchmarks and indicators (ICCD/COP(6)/L.12), the COP encourages Parties, OSS, CILSS, NGOs and other interested organizations to continue their initiative on developing benchmarks and indicators, and encourages the CST to evaluate the progress of work at its next session. It also encourages Parties to develop, test and use appropriate benchmarks and indicators, especially those targeting the local level and civil society involvement. The COP invites Parties, international organizations, and interested public and private entities to contribute scientifically, technically and financially to developing country Party initiatives to develop, test and use appropriate benchmarks and indicators.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS: The CST considered early warning systems on Wednesday, 27 August, and approved the draft decision on Thursday, 28 August, without amendment.

The Chair of the CST *Ad hoc* Group on Early Warning Systems, Kazuhiko Takeuchi, noted that there are no long-term early warning systems for desertification, and observed that short-term early warning systems for national and regional levels are insufficient. Chair Valentini called on Parties and national focal points to adopt an integrated approach in developing long-term early warning systems. Canada highlighted the interlinkages between indicators for desertification and long-term early warning systems and Norway stressed the need to develop short-term early warning systems for local and national levels based on local knowledge. In response to an inquiry, Takeuchi suggested using existing early warning systems to cost-effectively develop early warning systems for desertification.

Final Decision: In the decision on early warning systems (ICCD/COP(6)/L.8), the COP invites Parties, according to their financial and technical capacities, to carry out pilot studies on early warning systems using recommendations of the *ad hoc* panel. It also encourages Parties and international organizations to provide technical and financial support to developing country Parties wishing to carry out such pilot studies.

LAND DEGRADATION ASSESSMENT IN DRYLANDS AND THE MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT: On Wednesday and Thursday, 27-28 August, the CST discussed Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). The CST approved the draft decisions on Friday, 29 August.

A representative of the MA provided a status report on its work, and responded to Parties' questions regarding: countries' involvement in the assessment; nomination of experts; the MA's development of indicators and benchmarks; use of traditional knowledge; and the relationship with the LADA. FAO reported on LADA's activities and achievements. Regarding the involvement of the roster of experts, Germany and Japan suggested that the Secretariat facilitate linkages between the Group of Experts and the LADA and MA. Colombia, Israel, Canada and the US emphasized the active involvement of experts from the roster in the two assessments.

Final Decision: In the decision on LADA and the MA (ICCD/COP(6)/L.10), the COP requests the CCD Executive Secretary to take necessary actions to strengthen the linkages between the work of the Group of Experts, LADA and MA, and requests the LADA and the MA to: involve the roster experts; include Parties' needs in their future work; report on progress at COP-7; and provide information on the role of the Group of Experts and national focal points in carrying out their assessments.

WORK PROGRAMME OF THE CST: On Wednesday and Thursday, 27-28 August, the CST discussed its programme of work, and the draft decision was approved with a minor amendment on Friday, 29 August.

Several Parties expressed support for an integrated approach to best practices and research relating to land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation. Germany and Switzerland suggested that Parties examine existing projects that adopt an integrated approach and identify how they relate to desertification.

Final Decision: In the final decision on the work programme of the CST (ICCD/COP(6)/L.11), the COP decides that the priority issue addressed by CST-6, "Land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation: an integrated approach," should be further discussed at CST-7. The COP encourages Parties to submit reports on case studies to the Secretariat in advance. The COP also requests the Secretariat to facilitate an intersessional CST Bureau meeting to review decisions taken by the COP regarding the CST's work, especially on the planning and organization of CST-7.

IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CST: The CST discussed this issue on Tuesday, 26 August. The CST approved the draft decision on Friday, 29 August.

The International NGO Network on Desertification (RIOD)-Europe expressed concern at the lack of NGO participation in the Group of Experts. The GEF expressed hope that the CST would provide input into its operational programme on sustainable land management. David Mouat, Coordinator of the Facilitation Committee of the Group of Experts, presented the Group of Experts' preliminary report. Participants identified various priorities for the Group of Experts' future work, including poverty, early warning systems, land degradation, conservation, drought, and sustainable dryland development. Germany, with Cuba and UNESCO, emphasized the need to close the gap between scientific information available at the global level, and the ability to use it at the local level.

The EU suggested deleting an annex containing a two-year work plan for the Group of Experts, citing insufficient prioritization of listed tasks. He proposed that the Group of Experts prioritize the tasks on the basis of comments and recommendations made at CST-6, and according to deliverables and the tasks' relevance to the CCD's implementation. While noting that the Group of Experts has worked, and continues to work, without a budget, David Mouat



cautioned Parties not to reduce the list of tasks. An informal group was convened to draft priorities and a draft decision for the Group of Experts' work plan. An NGO representative proposed adding text to the draft decision emphasizing NGO participation, and delegates agreed to include it in the preamble. Argentina, Morocco, Mexico and Colombia expressed concern over the provision that the Group of Experts would use only English, as this would limit discussion.

Final Decision: In the decision on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the CST (ICCD/COP(6)/L.14), the COP requests the Group of Experts to, *inter alia*:

- prioritize the work plan framework contained in its annex;
- carry out the prioritized work plan for the next two years based on sound financial planning;
- use primarily, whenever possible, one working language (English);
- use the Internet as the primary means of communication; and
- establish a road map for developing synergies with other conventions, organizations and intergovernmental treaties.

The annex on the framework of the two-year work plan for the Group of Experts includes:

- developing a clear communication strategy between the Group of Experts and the end users;
- identifying and assessing case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for implementing the CCD;
- synthesizing issues emerging from the NAPs and RAPs;
- evaluating state of the art common benchmark and indicator systems for monitoring and assessing desertification; and
- evaluating guidelines to update the world atlas.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE CST: On Friday, 29 August, delegates discussed the future work programme of the CST. The Secretariat said that CST-7 could focus on items that the CST approved during COP-6 decisions. Chair Valentini said the future CST work programme should reflect the topics of the eight COP decisions only. The EU observed that future work should be based on best practice, an integrated approach to addressing land degradation and rehabilitation, and recommended relevant criteria.

OTHER MATTERS: On Friday, 29 August, delegates discussed other matters, and Cuba suggested that the CST consider having intersessional meetings similar to the CRIC, in the future. The Secretariat said it would try to mobilize resources for this purpose.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION (CRIC)

The second session of the CRIC (CRIC-2) addressed the review of the implementation of the CCD and of its institutional arrangements, and review of information on the financing of CCD implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions. The CRIC held three meetings, beginning its work on Tuesday, 26 August, and approving six draft decisions in a closing meeting on Friday, 29 August. A number of informal meetings were held between Tuesday and Friday to discuss the draft decisions paragraph-by-paragraph. The final decisions were adopted by the COP on Wednesday, 3 September.

OPENING OF THE SESSION: On Tuesday, 26 August, CRIC Chair Mohammed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth (Mauritania) opened the first meeting of CRIC-2, expressing hope that the "good work" from CRIC-1 could be continued at CRIC-2. He presented six draft decisions, prepared by CRIC-1 Chair Biao and the CRIC

Bureau, on the review of the implementation of the CCD and of its institutional arrangements to be forwarded to the COP for adoption. Participants then adopted the agenda and the organization of work (ICCD/CRIC(2)/1).

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE

CHAIR: On Friday, 29 August, participants addressed the election of other officers. The EU requested suspending the CRIC and reconvening again following the COP Plenary, in order for the COP to elect the Chair of CRIC-3 prior to the CRIC's election of the CRIC Vice Chairs. Following deliberations, Parties agreed to elect the three nominated Vice Chairs: for the Asian Group, Khaled Al Shara'a (Syria); for GRULAC, Víctor del Angel González (Mexico); and for the Central and Eastern European Group, Evgeni Gorshkov (Russian Federation).

In the COP Plenary on Friday, 5 September, following an agreement to elect Mohammed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth as CRIC-3 Chair, President Simeón Negrín said the COP would assume responsibility for electing the final CRIC Vice Chair, as the CRIC had already completed its work. Parties then elected Annemarie Watts (Australia) for WEOG as the fourth CRIC Vice-Chair.

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CCD AND OF ITS INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: This issue was first discussed on Tuesday, 26 August. Regarding the report of CRIC-1, delegates urged caution in the consideration of the recommendations in the report, and stressed that the CRIC should not duplicate the work of the COP. The EU said the GM continues to have a distinct and crucial role in mobilizing resources and building partnerships. Delegates approved the document with small corrections.

On the review of the report on enhanced implementation of the CCD's obligations, delegates agreed to consider the draft decisions on the review of the CCD's implementation in informal meetings.

GLOBAL MECHANISM: This issue was first addressed by the CRIC on Wednesday, 27 August, and then in informal meetings. A draft decision was approved by the CRIC on Friday, 29 August.

GM Managing Director Per Rydén spoke on the review of the report on activities of the GM, highlighting two evaluations of the GM and the finalization of its business plan. He outlined several recommendations from the evaluations and lessons learned, underscoring mainstreaming and partnership building as the two pillars of the GM's operational strategy. Pierre Marc Johnson, head of the Secretariat's independent evaluation team, underscored challenges faced by the GM regarding both supply and demand.

Parties congratulated the GM for its contribution to implementing the CCD, and underscored some shortcomings and recommendations. The G-77/China urged the COP to set a clear mandate and priorities for the GM. A representative of the NGO community called for an improvement in NGO participation in the GM's activities. Many delegates welcomed the new GEF operational programme, noted that new funds should be mobilized together with the GM, and requested the CCD Secretariat and the GEF to strengthen coordination for mobilizing resources.

In response to the comments, Rydén underscored the complementary roles of the GM and the GEF, and stressed that the GM's Facilitation Committee would address the role of NGOs in the GM. Johnson noted two challenges for the GM: to increase ODA flows, and to facilitate the emergence of policies that have to involve planning, finance and agriculture ministries.



REVIEW OF INFORMATION ON THE FINANCING OF CCD IMPLEMENTATION BY MULTILATERAL AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS:

This issue was discussed in CRIC plenary on Wednesday, 27 August. Several Parties urged the COP to endorse the GEF as a financial mechanism of the CCD, and appealed to the CCD's partners to ensure that adequate resources be made available to the GEF. Participants also noted that the Memorandum of Understanding between CCD and the GEF should comprise a timetable and budget estimates, and that the establishment of criteria for GEF funding should focus on, *inter alia*, mega-projects based on the NAPs. Parties also urged further synergies among other conventions to complement actions that are relevant for the CCD.

FINAL DECISION: The final decision on further steps in the implementation of the CCD (ICCD/COP(6)/L.1/Rev.2) includes six subcategories:

- resource mobilization, including coordination and partnership agreements;
- rehabilitation of degraded land;
- promotion of private sector and economic opportunities in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions/countries;
- capacity building, especially in the fields of participatory processes, legislative and institutional frameworks and promotion of synergies;
- monitoring and assessment, including the improvement of the reporting process; and
- awareness raising, information and communication.

In the final decision on "the overall review of the activities of the Secretariat and of the progress made by affected country Parties in the implementation of the CCD" (ICCD/COP(6)/L.2/Rev.1), the COP requests: the Secretariat to pursue its activities in the areas of services of the COP; continue its assistance to affected developing countries, and other Parties covered by Regional Implementation Annexes with regard to timely delivery of national reports requested by the CRIC; and intensify its efforts to promote synergies

In the final decision on the "implementation of the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the CCD" (decision 8/COP.4) (ICCD/COP(6)/L.3/Rev.1), the COP stresses that the affected developing countries and other Parties covered by the CCD's Regional Implementation Annexes need to enhance the role and effectiveness of the CCD in their national development strategies and encourages developed countries and relevant international organizations to take into account the aims and objectives of the CCD in their strategies to support the efforts of the affected Parties.

In the final decision on the "review of policies, operational modalities and activities of the GM" (ICCD/COP(6)/L.4/Rev.1), the COP requests the GM to focus on mobilizing financial resources to support CCD implementation by broadening the funding base for implementation, give greater emphasis on identifying sources of co-financing for GEF projects and facilitating funding rather than providing technical advice on project design. It also requests the GM to: foster the supply side of bilateral and multilateral finance and partnership building for CCD implementation; continue to provide support to affected countries in mainstreaming NAPs into development frameworks; and assist in mobilizing new sources of financing. The COP also urges the Facilitation Committee to enhance collaboration with, and support to, the GM in order to improve programmatic convergence in the

implementation of their activities within the CCD framework, in particular with regard to the role of the implementing agencies of the GEF.

The final decision on the "collaboration with the GEF" (ICCD/COP(6)/L.5/Rev.2) addresses the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism and the arrangements for establishing a working relationship with the GEF. In this decision, the COP decides to accept the GEF as a financial mechanism of the CCD, and requests the CCD Executive Secretary, with the Managing Director of the GM, to consult with the CEO and Chair of the GEF with a view to prepare and agree a Memorandum of Understanding on the arrangements for consideration and adoption by COP-7. It also invites Parties to submit their views on how the GEF should take into consideration policies, strategies and priorities agreed upon by the COP. It also requests the CCD Executive Secretary to report to COP-7 on measures taken to implement this decision.

In the final decision on "the programme of work of CRIC-3" (ICCD/COP(6)/L.6/Rev.1), the COP decides to include on the CRIC-3 agenda the review of implementation of the CCD and of its institutional arrangements, including the review of reports on implementation of affected African developing countries, noting that the review of reports of other regional groups on CCD implementation will be conducted in alphabetical order at future sessions of the CRIC. CRIC-3 will also review available information regarding the mobilization and use of financial resources and other support by multilateral agencies and institutions.

FIFTH ROUND TABLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

The fifth Round Table of Parliamentarians met from Wednesday to Thursday, 3-4 September to deliberate on the role of members of parliament in promoting sustainable development and implementing the CCD at the national level. On Thursday, parliamentarians drafted their Declaration, which was amended and approved by acclamation. On Friday, 5 September, the COP adopted a decision noting the Declaration as an annex to the COP-6 report (ICCD/COP(6)/L.23). The Declaration proposes, *inter alia*: the creation, under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of a Parliamentary Network on the CCD; and the involvement of elected representatives at regional, subregional, national and local levels to influence and monitor their governments' actions relating to the CCD. It also requests the CCD Secretariat to organize the next round table during COP-7, and follow up on actions recommended by the parliamentarians.

CLOSING PLENARY

Following lengthy bilateral discussions and informal consultations on the programme and budget, the final COP Plenary convened at 11:50 pm on Friday, 5 September.

COP-6 Vice-Chair and Rapporteur Anne Marie Skjold introduced, and delegates adopted the report of COP-6 (ICCD/COP(6)/L.28), agreeing that the Rapporteur will finalize the report after the close of the session.

In his closing remarks, Executive Secretary Diallo welcomed the successful conclusion of COP-6 and said the meeting had displayed a clear determination and commitment to the CCD's implementation. Regarding the budget, he undertook to ensure transparency, accountability and monitoring. He concluded by saying that "Havana" has fulfilled expectations and noted that "the struggle will continue."



The G-77/China introduced a decision expressing gratitude to the Government and people of Cuba, which was adopted by acclamation (ICCD/COP(6)/L.27). Colombia, for GRULAC, said COP-6 reaffirmed the commitment to fight desertification and promote mechanisms to reduce poverty. Belarus, for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, welcomed the COP-6 decisions on, *inter alia*, the work of the CST and progress on early warning systems, indicators and benchmarks, and the GEF. Uganda, for the African Group, said COP-6 was a turning point in the implementation of the CCD and stressed its impact on poverty eradication in Africa and the strengthening of NAP implementation. The EU said COP-7 must address the functioning of the Secretariat regarding the budget, and called for increased transparency in the decisionmaking process, particularly the elections of officers for the CCD's subsidiary bodies. Jamaica underlined the importance of the CCD as a tool to guarantee social justice and eradicate poverty. Guatemala highlighted the impact of desertification and land degradation on indigenous peoples and Iran called for increased implementation to achieve the MDGs. A representative of the NGO community said neither the mainstreaming of NAPs into national development strategies nor real civil society participation can be postponed.

In her final remarks, COP-6 President Simeón Negrín highlighted the spirit of cooperation and compromise, and called on all actors to increase their efforts to combat desertification. She urged delegates to take responsibility for the implementation of COP-6 decisions, and to show that "a better world is possible." She gavelled the meeting to a close at 1:43 am on Saturday, 6 September.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COP-6

"If you want to lean on a tree, first make sure it can hold you." - African proverb

Having strengthened the CCD "tree" at previous COPs, the sixth Conference of the Parties (COP-6) marked the transition from awareness raising to implementation, enabling Parties to lean on this tree. There certainly was scope to scale a critical threshold by finally taking important and overdue steps. These included designating the GEF as a financial mechanism for the CCD and identifying CRIC criteria for the COP-7 review. Two factors served as an additional impetus to making significant progress: the presence of Cuban President Fidel Castro, known for his ability to do "much with very little," and the first anniversary of the WSSD, which identified combating desertification as a tool for eradicating poverty.

The Havana Declaration, which resulted from the two days' discussions among the 13 Heads of State and Government and was appended to the more substantial COP decisions, while falling short of addressing the specific objectives of COP-6, reaffirms a strong political commitment to combating desertification.

Looking at the two weeks of negotiations, several items merit particular attention. Clearly, the most controversial issue was the programme and budget, and little headway was made on the regional coordination units (RCUs). In contrast, the designation of the GEF as the CCD's financial mechanism was the biggest success of COP-6. Progress was also made with regard to synergies with other conventions. With concern being voiced in the corridors, over the lack of transparency, the Secretariat's role must also be examined. Finally, it is important to gauge the impact of the high-level segment on the future operation of the CCD, and the role of emerging regional groups.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

Agreement on the GEF's new role was clearly a high point of COP-6, marking the beginning of a new era for the CCD. Although the GEF will make available US\$500 million over three years to land degradation and desertification programmes, much less than for its other four focal areas (climate change, biodiversity, international waters and ozone depletion), this resource will nonetheless make a long-awaited difference for developing country Parties in implementing the CCD. Significantly, the CCD will also receive a psychological boost, hopefully leaving behind its image of the "poor sister" convention and standing on a par with other multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The debate on the Secretariat's programme and budget once again brought to the surface a certain distrust held by some Parties toward the Secretariat, which was submitted to a grilling over past and proposed expenditures. The negotiations also illustrated the long-standing tensions between developed and developing country Parties regarding the CCD, with the US advocating nominal zero increase in the budget, and the African Group bolstering it by 35%. The Group's reasoning was that the CCD is an important vehicle for addressing the economic woes of developing countries, in particular Africa, and a small Secretariat budget greatly reduces any prospect for making headway on this issue. Yet the debate also illustrates the problem donors face to answer demands of funding a mushrooming number of MEAs at a time of financial strain.

The final compromise to increase the Secretariat budget by 5% is a reflection of growing pressure from donors to channel financial resources into ground-level projects, rather than to an administrative structure. Given that it is on the ground where the main fight against desertification takes place, this seems a positive development. At the same time, it remains to be seen how the Secretariat can implement the many requests put to it by COP-6, with a truncated capacity.

The general discontent over the budget, strongly articulated by Canada in the closing Plenary, provided food for thought for the Secretariat and the new COP Bureau. In her statement, the Canadian delegate expressed regret that the budget negotiations put accountability, transparency and effectiveness into doubt. She warned that her country would not hesitate to redirect its funds into processes that combat desertification more efficiently if the three above principles remain neglected at COP-7. In his closing remarks, Executive Secretary Diallo, responded with political astuteness that he would ensure greater transparency and accountability in the next biennium budget for 2006-7.

THE SECRETARIAT'S ROLE

Throughout the COP, an undercurrent of skepticism towards the Secretariat's posture ran through the corridors. Two issues were the basis for concern: lack of transparency evidenced by the mode of electing COP officers, and financial support provided to select NGOs. The controversy over the elections raised the legal problem of sequence: could the CRIC Vice-Chairs be elected before the CRIC Chair? With the Rules of Procedure being unclear on the sequence, Parties were confused, and the Executive Secretary's clarification that consultations had been held was questioned. This episode proved once again that the Secretariat must be seen to ensure the democratic and rule-bound processes of environmental governance.



There is also a lack of clarity regarding criteria used to fund NGOs to attend the negotiations. According to one observer, the Secretariat does not shy away from funding “friendly” NGOs. To be fair, the Secretariat’s efforts to involve a larger number of developing country NGOs and its dedication to making the CCD a success, deserves recognition.

CCD EFFECTIVENESS

Several agenda items were of direct relevance to speeding up the transition to the implementation phase, including synergies between conventions, the CST’s Group of Experts, benchmarks and indicators, the CRIC’s new programme of work, and RCUs. With the linkages between climate change, desertification and biodiversity, Parties to the three Rio conventions have been working on developing synergies and drawing on experiences gained in each other’s processes, while trying to avoid duplication of work. The outcome of the negotiations on the synergies decision was far from groundbreaking, and the three Executive Secretaries failed to convene in their scheduled Joint Liaison Group meeting. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the CCD Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species did, nevertheless, show that advances are taking place. Parties hoped that COP-7 will see significant development in this area and that cooperation with other conventions will take place at the national and regional levels as well.

Discussions on the Group of Experts, benchmarks and indicators, and on the new CRIC programme of work illustrated the negotiators’ awareness of inadequacies in institution-building, and their willingness to address them. On the Group of Experts, progress was made towards prioritizing its work to maximize its scientific impact. The CST also made headway in developing benchmarks and indicators, which will lead to translating the abundant existing scientific information into policy-relevant advice.

On RCUs, budget-related disagreements resurfaced. The EU, US and Canada argued against straining the core CCD budget by funding the three existing RCUs in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This effectively deferred the issue of strengthening existing RCUs to COP-7. According to some observers, the whole issue of the RCUs is more important than it appears on the surface. Support for RCUs is in reality a battle for greater regional coordination and equal distribution of financial flows, countering a growing concern that donors would prefer a bilateral model instead. This might explain why the G-77/China, in particular the African Group, fought with such passion the donor countries’ reluctance to provide sound financial backing for the RCUs.

EMERGING REGIONAL INTERESTS

COP-6 was also noted by the emergence of several regional interest groups that made themselves heard and can be expected to play a growing role in future negotiations. The Annex V (Central and Eastern European) countries are expected to have an impact on CCD implementation but are presently going through a difficult period of adjustment, tinged by a conflict of interests. Several EU-accessing members are driven by divided group loyalties, adding confusion to the process: some countries are donors, some are affected countries, yet others are undecided about their final status. Their current goal is to set common priorities and elaborate a regional coordination agenda. They are unlikely to compete with the other annexes for funds, requiring some seed money for developing NAPs. They may open new avenues of capacity building and technology transfer, especially on advanced space monitoring.

Some observers regarded with suspicion the SIDS’ insistence on being treated as a “special case” and define itself as a new regional actor in the CCD process, which some feared would shift the CCD’s focus away from Africa. This was, however, strongly discounted by some ministers from the region. The host country’s focus on land degradation and desertification in SIDS, an issue almost absent from previous COPs, attracted considerable attention. It is still open for interpretation whether Cuba’s posture on land issues and agricultural innovations, or the ten-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action next year, will lead to negotiations on a new regional implementation annex at COP-7.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Havana was chosen as the site for the Conference. Whatever the pros and cons of having a mini-summit of thirteen Latin American and African Heads of State and Government, some of them highly visible, if not controversial, the gathering was bound to project a political agenda well beyond the technical confines of the Conference. Seen from the outside, a “developing country” convention can always use a high profile, and this COP did attempt to ratchet up the desertification issue. Whether the method and the rhetoric would agree with the donors was a risk the organizers clearly wanted to take. The ringing words of Fidel brought back the memories of Sierra Maestra: the march on the bastions of neo-liberalism and globalization was on. The silent minority felt that this was not the best way of attracting donor support, and was distracting from the business at hand.

Actually, Cuba received high marks for its support for the convention, be it awareness raising or national implementation. Interestingly enough, it managed to bridge the waters between two continents at the highest plane. Linking the Caribbean SIDS and other Latin American countries with Africa, through their common heritage - the “slavery connection” - was President Castro’s astute move, which discounted possible fears that Africa’s cherished focus of the convention may weaken.

Apart from the high-level segment, COP-6 will most likely be remembered for finalizing the decision that opened the GEF to funding desertification programmes. This achievement, along with bringing order to the CCD structures can be expected to bring the CCD closer to breaching the implementation gap. On the other hand, the CCD Secretariat faces new challenges, such as a down-sized budget and the need to build credibility.

The new focus on implementation, rather than on awareness raising, places a great responsibility on the Secretariat. A question that the CCD will have to consider is which issues in the desertification battles ahead need to be addressed in the far removed and bureaucratic “virtual world” of the international level, and which are best decided in the “real world,” nationally or locally. The disconnectedness between these two worlds is illustrated by the fact that many concrete projects on best practices in combating desertification were presented by NGOs working on the ground, while less than half a dozen Parties were able to submit reports on this matter. Moreover, despite the COPs’ repeated decisions, less than a third of the Parties have submitted their NAPs.

If the CCD does not address the new challenges it faces, in particular the reality of reduced financial contributions and wavering political commitment from some donor Parties, the future of the only developing countries’ Convention may be bleak indeed.



THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE COP-7

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TROPICAL SAVANNAS AND SEASONALLY DRY FORESTS – ECOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT: This conference will be held from 14-20 September 2003, in Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom. For more information, contact: Edinburgh Centre for Tropical Forests; tel: +44-131-440-0400; fax: +44-131-440-4141; e-mail: savanna-conference@ectf-ed.org.uk; Internet: <http://www.nmw.ac.uk/ectf/events.htm#International>

12TH WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS: This Congress will take place from 21-28 September 2003, in Quebec City, Canada. For more information, contact: World Forestry Congress 2003 Secretariat; tel: +1-418-694-2424; fax: +1-418-694-9922; e-mail: sec-gen@wfc2003.org; Internet: <http://www.wfc2003.org>

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECO-RESTORATION: This conference will be held from 23-30 September 2003, in Dehradun and New Delhi, India. For more information, contact: Brij Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru University; tel: +91-11-610-7676 ext 2324; fax: +91-11-616-9962; e-mail: brij@nieindia.org; Internet: <http://www.nieindia.org/conferences.htm>

CONGRESS ON GLOBALIZATION, LOCALIZATION AND TROPICAL FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY: The Congress takes place from 22-23 October 2003, in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. For more information, contact: Mirjam A.F. Ros-Tonen, AGIDS / University of Amsterdam; tel: +31 (0)20 525 4062/ 4063; fax: +31 (0)20 525 4051; e-mail: m.a.f.ros-tonen@uva.nl; Internet: <http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/agids/globalisation>

NINTH MEETING OF THE CBD SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE: CBD SBSTTA-9 will convene from 10-14 November 2003, in Montreal, Canada. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY COUNCIL: The GEF Council meeting will be convened from 19-21 November 2003, in Washington, DC, US. NGO consultations will precede the Council meeting. For more information, contact: the GEF Secretariat; tel +1-202-473-0508; fax: +1-202-522-3240; e-mail: secretariatgef@worldbank.org; Internet: <http://www.gefweb.org>

NINTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC): UNFCCC COP-9 will be held from 1-12 December 2003, in Milan, Italy. For more information, contact: UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; Internet: <http://www.unfccc.int> and <http://www.minambiente.it/cop9>

SECOND MEETING OF CBD AD-HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING: CBD ABS-2 will meet from 1-5 December 2003, in Montreal, Canada. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>.

CBD AD-HOC WORKING GROUP ON ARTICLE 8(J): The meeting on the CBD's Working Group on Article 8(j) will convene from 8-12 December 2003, in Montreal, Canada. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>.

THIRTIETH MEETING OF THE STANDING

COMMITTEE TO THE RAMSAR CONVENTION: The 30th meeting of Ramsar's Standing Committee will be convened from 12-16 January 2004, in Gland, Switzerland. For more information, contact: Ramsar Secretariat; tel: +41-22-999-0170; fax +41-22-999-0169; e-mail: ramsar@ramsar.org; Internet: <http://www.ramsar.org/meetings.htm>

SEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY : CBD COP-9 will be convened from 9-20 February 2004, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2200; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org/convention/cops.asp>

THIRD INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FOREST RESOURCES (SIMFOR 2004): This symposium will be held from 21-23 April 2004, in Piñar del Rio, Cuba. For more information, contact: Fernando Hernandez Martinez; tel: +53-82-779363; fax: +53-82-779353; e-mail: fhernandez@af.upr.edu.cu; Internet: <http://iufro.boku.ac.at/>

FOURTH UN FORUM ON FORESTS (UNFF-4): UNFF-4 will take place from 3-14 May 2004, in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, contact: Mia Söderlund, UNFF Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-3262; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: unff@un.org; Internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/>

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECONOMICS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT: This Conference will take place from 20-22 May 2004, in Toronto, Canada. For more information, contact: Shashi Kant, Conference Secretariat; tel: +1-416-978-6196; fax: +1-416-978-3834; e-mail: shashi.kant@utoronto.ca; Internet: http://www.forestry.utoronto.ca/socio_economic/icesfm/

CRIC-3: The third meeting of the CCD's Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention is scheduled for fall 2004, in Bonn, Germany. The exact dates will be determined by the Bureau. For more information, contact the UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2802; fax: +49-228-815-2898/99; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; Internet: <http://www.unccd.int/>

NINETEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON IRRIGATION AND DRAINAGE (ICID): The Congress will be held from 10-18 September 2005, in Beijing, China. For more information, contact: Chinese National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage; tel: +86-10-6841-5522/6841-6506; fax: +86-10-6845-1169; e-mail: cncid@iwhr.com; Internet: http://www.icid.org/index_e.html

COP-7: COP-7 is scheduled to be held from 17-28 October 2005, in Bonn, Germany, if no Party offers to host the session and meet the additional cost. For more information, contact the UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2802; fax: +49-228-815-2898/99; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; Internet: <http://www.unccd.int/>