



## CCD COP-7 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2005

The Seventh Conference of the Parties (COP-7) to the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) opened on Monday afternoon, 17 October at the UN Office at Nairobi, Kenya. During the opening ceremony, delegates heard statements from a representative of UNEP, the CCD Executive Secretary, Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, and the Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya. In the opening plenary, delegates elected the COP-7 President and other officers, as well the Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), and adopted the agenda and the organization of work. Parties also approved the accreditation of a number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

### OPENING CEREMONY

COP-7 opened with a cultural performance by three singing and dancing groups. Andrew Kiptoon, Permanent Representative of Kenya to UNEP, opened the ceremony and welcomed participants to Nairobi. He invited delegates to observe a minute of silence to commemorate the recent passing of Rosa Elena Simeón Negrín, Cuba's Minister for Science, Technology and the Environment and COP-6 President, and Joke Waller-Hunter, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the victims of the recent natural disasters.

On behalf of UNEP Deputy Executive Director Shafqat Kakakhel, Bakary Kante, Director for Environmental Conventions of UNEP, welcomed participants to UNEP headquarters, and thanked the Kenyan Government for hosting COP-7.

Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the CCD, expressed his gratitude to the Government of Kenya for hosting COP-7, and suggested this may help strengthen ties to UNEP in the development of the CCD. He noted strong support for the Convention expressed at the 2005 World Summit, especially with regard to its ability to address Millennium Development Goals, but lamented that affected country parties continue to have difficulties in implementing commitments under the CCD due to lack of investment.

Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, conveyed the Norwegian Nobel Committee's message, which stresses that sustainable management of the environment, democracy and peace should be linked. She said that if we want a peaceful world, we have to manage our environment responsibly and sustainably, and share the limited natural resources equitably at local, national, and global levels. She also highlighted the importance of the 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) approach and suggested the addition of a fourth R, "repair resources", as this holds appeal to people in both developed and developing countries and their respect for nature. In her concluding remarks, she called upon delegates to plant more trees, and said we could win the fight against desertification if we remain committed.

Moody Awori, Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya, welcomed delegates to Kenya. He stressed that a large part of the country is arid, semi-arid and fragile land, and that Kenyans depend on natural systems. Reiterating Kenya's commitment to implement practical measures for combating desertification and eradicating poverty, he said that efforts to defeat poverty will be in vain if environmental degradation and natural resource depletion continue, and emphasized the importance of investment in environmental management. Noting that the effects of desertification due to human activities are increasing globally, he said that the conference documents prepared by the CCD Executive Secretary contain useful suggestions. He urged the international community to provide additional financial resources and technology to implement national action programmes (NAPs), and supported establishing a national desertification control fund and engaging the private sector and civil society. Awori then officially declared COP-7 open.

### OPENING PLENARY

José Antonio Díaz Duque, COP-6 President and Cuba's Vice-Minister for Science, Technology and the Environment, reviewed the achievements made at COP-6 and said that the decisions made at COP-6 strengthened Convention implementation and contributed to desertification control and poverty reduction. He expressed confidence that COP-7 would further strengthen implementation and consolidation of the Convention.

Delegates then elected Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Kenya, COP-7 President by acclamation.



President Musyoka congratulated the outgoing COP-6 President and other COP-6 bureau members for their contributions, and expressed appreciation to the CCD Secretariat for the excellent preparations for COP-7. He believed that COP-7 would arrive at practical decisions for implementing the Convention, and stressed that the theme of this session is combating desertification for sustainable livelihoods.

CCD Executive Secretary Diallo presented an overview of the Secretariat's activities to date, including: service to the COP and its subsidiary bodies, advocacy and awareness raising, liaison with other organizations and civil society actors, and support to developing countries. He also reported on specific activities at the regional and subregional levels in all five affected regions, including joint projects with UNEP and UNDP, support to priority activities under New Partnership for Africa's Development, technical support and coordination. He noted that 32 countries have finalized their NAPs, and that an additional four have completed drafts. He reported on activities related to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification, and highlighted documents prepared for COP-7.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:** President Musyoka introduced the documents containing the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(7)/1 and Add.1) and noted that Norway, also on behalf of Australia, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, and the US, had requested to include an additional item regarding the procedure of the selection of an Executive Secretary. He then proposed that the COP adopt the agenda as contained in ICCD/COP(7)/1 and defer ICCD/COP(7)/1/Add.1 for consultations in regional and interest groups. Delegates adopted the agenda as contained in ICCD/COP(7)/1.

**ELECTION OF OTHER OFFICERS:** President Musyoka introduced the regional nominations for the posts of Vice Presidents and Rapporteur of COP-7: Syria and the Philippines for the Asian Group; Chad for the African Group; Bolivia and Saint Lucia for the Latin American and Caribbean Group; and Belarus and the Czech Republic for the Central and Eastern European Group. The UK nominated Belgium and the US for the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). The nominated countries, except the US, were elected as Vice-Presidents. Noting

that the US has also been nominated for the post of CRIC-4 Chair, CRIC-3 Chair Mohamed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth (Mauritania) sought clarification on whether two delegates from one country can be elected to the Bureau. AUSTRALIA explained that the US is nominated to represent the WEOG. JAMAICA proposed delaying the decision until further information regarding relevant UN rules has been obtained. The election of the CRIC-4 Chair was postponed pending further consultations regarding this matter.

Following a short consultation, Viorel Blujdea (Romania) was nominated and elected as the CST Chair. President Musyoka announced that consultations would continue regarding the election of the remaining members of the Bureau.

**ORGANIZATION OF WORK:** The organization of work contained in ICCD/COP(7)/1 was adopted with a minor amendment.

**ACCREDITATION OF ORGANIZATIONS:** The meeting approved the accreditation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as listed in ICCD/COP(7)/11 and Add.1. CCD Executive Secretary Diallo noted that with the latest additions, the total number of NGOs accredited with the CCD was 793.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Consistent with previous COP meetings, COP-7 reserved Monday morning for regional consultations; participants felt that this was indeed useful, enabling regional groups to have substantive discussions and form positions on a number of key issues. Many delegates also expressed satisfaction with the organization of the meeting, commending the Secretariat, the host country and the UN Office at Nairobi for a job well done in preparing for the meeting, which they hope will lay a good foundation for the two-week long deliberations. Many delegates have high expectations for this COP to promote and consolidate implementation of the Convention, due to the high level of participation and the fact that it is being held in Africa, the area of the world most affected by desertification.

The first day also signaled that there might be tough consultations on the last-minute proposal to add an agenda item on the procedure for the appointment of an Executive Secretary.

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