



CCD COP-7 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2005

Delegates continued their deliberations in the seventh session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the fourth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-4). The Committee of the Whole (COW) convened in the morning to consider the programme and budget and the regional coordination units (RCU). CST met in morning and afternoon sessions to address: traditional knowledge; benchmarks and indicators; early warning systems; land degradation; and the programme of work. CRIC-4 met in an afternoon session to consider the Global Mechanism (GM) and review of available information regarding the financing of Convention implementation.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Riccardo Valentini (Italy) chaired the meeting.

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: CCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo made a presentation on the programme and budget (ICCD/COP(7)/2), and introduced relevant documents concerning: programme and budget for the biennium 2006-2007; report on the performance of the Convention's trust funds in the biennium 2004-2005; report on the performance of the trust fund for supplementary activities in the biennium 2004-2005 as at 30 June 2005; audited financial statements for the Convention's trust funds for the biennium 2002-2003, ended 31 December 2003; report of the United Nations Board of Auditors; and report on the status of contributions to the Convention's trust funds in the biennium 2004-2005. Diallo highlighted budget constraints due to the depreciation of the US dollar, which has limited the Secretariat's activities and staffing, and recommended that measures be taken to guard against further budget erosion. He noted that the current surplus figure is distorted by substantial unpaid contributions, which he urged parties to rectify.

SAUDI ARABIA, on behalf of the Asian Group, supported the proposed programme and budget, but was concerned about the depletion of funds for CCD implementation, and expressed hope that the committed resources will become operational. The EU emphasized improving the efficiency of financial management and prioritizing the programme of work. ARGENTINA, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), suggested fair allocation of resources to operational and development activities. AUSTRALIA expressed concern over new activities in the proposed programme and budget.

The EU suggested that funding for the remainder of 2005 should be addressed first, along with criticism leveled by the auditors' report, and other issues such as unpaid contributions and currency fluctuations. VIETNAM called for funds to implement its national action programme (NAP).

MAURITANIA stated that voluntary funds have enabled civil society participation from the least developed countries and should be increased.

Chair Valentini established a contact group to continue discussion on the programme and budget.

REGIONAL COORDINATION UNITS: The Secretariat introduced the document on the rationale for, modalities for, costs involved in, feasibility of, possible terms of reference of, and institutional and collaborative arrangements for RCUs (ICCD/COP(7)/7). JAMAICA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, urged COP-7 to take a decision on the issue. JAPAN opposed funding RCUs from the CCD's budget. GRULAC highlighted the important role of RCUs in implementing the Convention. The Asian Group emphasized the RCUs' role in coordinating regional efforts and avoiding duplication of work.

Chair Valentini established a contact group, which met in the afternoon. Two draft decisions were proposed but no agreement was reached.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE: Chair Viorel Blujdea (Romania) introduced documents ICCD/COP(7)/CST/5 and Add.1.

The Secretariat circulated a publication, "The Promotion of Traditional Knowledge", which contains the outcomes of two *ad hoc* panels. ITALY outlined its proposal on setting up a network of institutions, bodies and experts on traditional knowledge, and INDIA, CUBA and others commended the initiative. UNESCO described its work on protecting traditional knowledge, and KENYA supported the Latin American and Caribbean proposal to establish a thematic programme network on best practices and traditional knowledge, and suggested its expansion to other regions.

BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS: In introducing document ICCD/COP(7)/CST/6 on benchmarks and indicators, the Secretariat requested delegates to bear in mind work already accomplished, in particular the methodological framework contained in ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1, endorsed by a COP-2 decision. Speakers emphasized appropriate and broader use of indicators and benchmarks, and the need for resources and guidelines for indicators implementation in developing countries. The EU, supported by many, stressed the importance of impact and socioeconomic indicators.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS: Introducing document ICCD/COP(7)/CST/7 on pilot studies on early warning systems, the Secretariat noted their importance for understanding the causes of desertification and drought, and relevance to disaster reduction strategies. JAPAN presented a pilot study on desertification assessment and constructing an early warning system in North-East Asia. TURKEY outlined national activities



on early warning of drought. MOROCCO called for greater reliance on regional systems, and ITALY urged empowering local stakeholders. The EU noted that in the case of desertification early warning applies chiefly to assessment and monitoring.

PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE CST: The Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(7)/CST/4 on the report of the CST Bureau, and ICCD/COP(7)/CST/2 entitled "Priority issue: Synthesis of reports submitted by the country Parties on case studies illustrating best practices and research relating to land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation: an integrated approach".

On best practices and research, BELARUS, JAPAN, TURKEY, and THAILAND made detailed presentations on their experiences. In the ensuing discussion, NORWAY suggested that the reports of case studies be made available through the CCD website. The EU requested the Secretariat to summarize lessons learned. ITALY and FRANCE suggested that a summary of the best practices be reflected in recommendations. The US encouraged dissemination of lessons learned from all case studies, whether successful or not.

On the report of the CST Bureau, an outgoing Bureau member spoke on outcomes of the intersessional meeting, and highlighted recommendations on ways and means for improving the functioning, efficiency and effectiveness of the CST. Regarding the budget, the EU and GERMANY emphasized focusing and prioritizing the work of the Group of Experts, and the US stressed increasing resource allocation to the Committee. The G-77/CHINA recommended that, *inter alia*, resources be provided to *ad hoc* panels on specific issues. FRANCE opposed increasing the number of inter-sessional meetings. Regarding the appointment of CST national focal points, many countries highlighted the importance of making use of existing coordinating bodies and avoiding the proliferation of institutional structures. The G-77/CHINA, with others, welcomed the initiative of establishing a UNCCD fellowship programme. Several speakers commended the consideration of two emerging topics: creation of a task force on renewable energies; and the impact of crime and conflict on the environment. TANZANIA, supported by KENYA and BELIZE, suggested establishing an *ad hoc* working group on climate and land degradation.

LAND DEGRADATION ASSESSMENT IN DRYLANDS: The document ICCD/COP(7)/CST/8 containing an interim report prepared by FAO, was introduced by the Secretariat. FAO presented the progress of the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands project.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC-3 Chair Mohammed Mahmud Ould El Ghaouth (Mauritania) opened the session.

GLOBAL MECHANISM: Many countries expressed gratitude for GM support, and described a range of activities it has enabled, while others urged GM to simplify its procedure for accessing funding.

BURUNDI, SUDAN, and SOMALIA asked for greater attention to land degradation in areas affected by conflict. FINLAND suggested a results-based management approach to implementation. PAKISTAN called for GM assistance in mainstreaming NAPs. ZIMBABWE said the GM should focus on affected countries not currently benefiting from it, a sentiment echoed by the CONGO. CHINA described its counter-desertification efforts, including those by women's groups. KENYA noted the need to support private-public partnerships. MAURITANIA said that although NAPs had been drawn up, lack of funding has inhibited their implementation.

BELARUS, speaking on behalf of affected countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and the CZECH REPUBLIC, on behalf of non-affected countries in the region, urged the GM to start its work in Annex V countries. BURKINA FASO said the GM should continue to mobilize resources effectively.

Chair El Ghaouth said that the agenda item would be referred to the contact group on draft decisions.

REVIEW OF AVAILABLE INFORMATION

REGARDING THE FINANCING OF CONVENTION IMPLEMENTATION: In introducing the document (ICCD/CRIC(4)/5), the Secretariat noted that a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the CCD has been submitted to COP-7 for consideration, and that relations between CCD and GEF have improved. Many speakers requested the GEF to simplify its procedures and remove conditionality in funding projects. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION asked the GEF to fund a project in his country under GEF Operation Programme 15 (Sustainable Land Management). BURUNDI suggested the GEF work closely with its country focal points in facilitating project design and implementation. CHINA urged the GEF and donor countries to provide direct support to NAPs. UKRAINE called for GEF support for land rehabilitation projects. INDIA expressed concern over the slow pace in financing land degradation projects, and SENEGAL called for adequate funds for OP 15 in GEF's fourth replenishment.

MOZAMBIQUE recommended that OP 15 be made available for implementation of NAPs. GABON and DJIBOUTI stated that GEF funding is difficult to access. NICARAGUA stated that although this is true, the GEF has also made many contributions. URUGUAY urged a global approach, on par with other conventions. GUINEA requested assistance in addressing land degradation created by an influx of refugees. Replying to the points raised, the GEF urged applicant countries to make clear links to NAPs in their project proposals.

Chair El Ghaouth said a draft decision on the relationship between the GEF and CCD will be circulated at a later stage.

CONTACT GROUPS

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: The contact group on the programme and budget, chaired by Gerardo Guiza (Mexico), met in the afternoon. Explaining the programme and budget for the biennium 2006-2007, the Secretariat said that the increase in the budget as well as overspending in the current biennium is mainly a result of currency fluctuations. One regional group questioned this, saying the issue should be clarified before discussing the new budget. The group agreed on the agenda items to be considered: payment arrears; recent auditing; budget of the current biennium; coping with currency fluctuations; budget for the biennium 2006-2007; and the supplementary budget.

DRAFT DECISION FOR THE REVIEW OF THE CONVENTION: The contact group on the draft decision on fostering the Convention implementation process in Africa under the agenda for the review of the implementation of the Convention met in the afternoon and into the evening, and discussed a revised draft decision based on comments made previously. This draft removed some repetitions in the original text and made it more clear and straightforward. Some new issues were added, such as the GEF.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As delegates emerged from Wednesday's budget debates, one could not fail to miss an expression of frustration on weary faces. A delegate was heard voicing the concern of his group over the Secretariat's "overspending," which the appreciation of the Euro against the US dollar "could not convincingly explain". Many felt that this matter will continue to overshadow the proceedings in the coming days.

Regional Coordination Units, another issue with budgetary implications, confirmed its contentious nature. It seems that country positions remain entrenched: while some urge financing the RCU from the CCD's core budget, others strongly favor using existing regional mechanisms, or having the Secretariat carry out coordination. As a disgruntled delegate remarked, "It's a nostalgic throwback to COP-6."