



CCD COP-7 HIGHLIGHTS FRIDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2005

The plenary convened in morning and afternoon sessions to consider: inclusion of activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within the COP's official programme of work; a proposal for including an additional agenda item regarding the procedure for the selection of an Executive Secretary; and review of the implementation of the Convention and of its institutional arrangements. The Committee of the Whole (COW) met in the afternoon to review activities of the Secretariat and the progress made by affected country parties in the implementation of the Convention. The Committee of Science and Technology (CST) met in the afternoon and late into the evening to finalize draft decisions. Contact groups continued to meet throughout the day and into the evening to discuss the programme and budget, and the draft decisions for the review of the implementation of the Convention.

PLENARY

INCLUSION OF ACTIVITIES OF NGOS WITHIN THE COP'S OFFICIAL PROGRAMME OF WORK: COP-7

Vice-President Jozef Buys (Belgium) chaired the open dialogue session and introduced its theme: "crisis management and long-term adaptation through local action." CCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo stressed that open dialogue sessions advance NGO participation in Convention implementation. Franklin Moore (US) moderated the session.

Vore Seck, Conseil des ONG d'Appui au Developpement, launched the dialogue by introducing five case studies on local actions in Africa and Latin America. A case study from Ecuador described how local actions contribute to the implementation of the Rio Conventions, and another from Ethiopia described the challenge of moving from responding to crises to managing for long-term sustainability.

A case study from Zimbabwe illustrated how long-term local actions, through a reforestation project, resulted in increased resilience of forest ecosystems, and stressed that it is possible to reduce the rate of soil degradation and desertification by adopting adequate planning and using the right methodology.

A case study on decentralization and its ability to promote local action in Northern Mali described the challenges and lessons learned, emphasizing the importance of: providing people with appropriate tools and support; overcoming tensions through local actions; making use of local know-how; and the commitment of the central government.

A case study from Chad demonstrated problems in a region with an inflow of about 300,000 migrants from Sudan, which has caused further degradation of fragile ecosystems and

conflicts between local indigenous people and the refugees, and described NGO efforts to rectify the situation, including: training for refugees and local people; reforestation projects; and food security.

In the ensuing discussion, Moore opened the floor for discussions on the presentations. NGO and government representatives stressed the importance of: small-scale projects; synthesizing local practices; cooperation between local communities and government; advantages and disadvantages of decentralization; and the need for funding NGO activities. Several NGOs called for institutionalizing local communities within the Convention.

Patrice Burger, Cellule d'Appui à la Reforme Institutionnelle CARI, rounded up the discussion by calling for the empowerment of all stakeholders to implement the CCD. Diallo urged NGOs to strengthen their activities at the local and national levels, and invited them to participate in future CCD-sponsored meetings.

REPORTS OF THE CST AND THE CRIC-4: CST Chair Blujdea (Romania) reported that the Committee was considering draft decisions and attempting to approve all of them. CRIC-4 Chair Mohamed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth reported that the contact group on draft decisions was making progress in finalizing all draft texts. However, the Committee was unable to meet due to unfinished work in the contact group.

ELECTION OF A VICE-PRESIDENT OF COP-7 AND OTHER OFFICERS: Nominated by the UK, on behalf of the WEOG, Charles Haines (Canada) was elected Vice-President of COP-7 by acclamation. CRIC-4 Chair El Ghaouth nominated, and delegates elected by acclamation, Franklin Moore (US) as Chair of CRIC-5 and 6. His term will begin upon conclusion of the current CRIC session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: On the Norwegian proposal for including an additional item regarding the procedure for the selection of an Executive Secretary, Vice-President Erwin Ortiz (Bolivia) informed that COP-7 President is consulting with regional and interest groups. Australia and many others urged the plenary to take a decision sooner. After consultation with the Secretariat, Vice-President Ortiz announced that this issue will be addressed by an afternoon plenary session on Monday, 24 October.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Riccardo Valentini (Italy) called upon the meeting to consider the report of the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the Secretariat's report on the activities of the Secretariat and the CCD implementation (ICCD/COP(7)/4 and ICCD/CRIC(4)/2). Even Fontaine Ortiz, JIU, made a presentation on the procedure and methodology adopted and the major recommendations made



by the JIU. JAMAICA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, joined by many others, commended the Secretariat for its leading role in CCD implementation. She supported a decision on the JIU report and proposed establishing an *ad hoc* working group to consider its recommendations during the period leading to COP-8. Her motion was supported by many delegations. The UK, on behalf of the EU, supported by many others, stressed the need for a fresh look at approaches for the implementation of the CCD and the need for developing a common vision. ARGENTINA, on behalf of Latin America and the Caribbean, suggested, and delegates agreed, to establish a contact group on the JIU report.

Discussions on the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) were deferred to the contact group meeting scheduled on Sunday, 23 October.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Chair Blujdea opened the meeting. The Committee considered draft decisions for consideration at COP-7.

On early warning systems, the EU suggested adding a request to the Group of Experts (GoE) to report on progress made regarding this to the CST at its eighth session and deleting a paragraph requesting the Secretariat to report to COP-8 on this matter. The draft decision was adopted as amended.

On survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies, UNEP noted the infeasibility of adding additional activities to NEPAD's Action Plan for the Environment Initiative and suggested an amendment. Regarding the database of institutions developed under Phase 1 of the project, MOROCCO, supported by the US and BELIZE, said that the database should be transferred to the Secretariat. NORWAY questioned cost implications of its transfer. The EU, supported by NORWAY, but opposed by the US, spoke against adopting the draft decision, which was withdrawn.

On land degradation assessment in drylands (LADA), NORWAY, supported by the EU and the US, proposed several amendments, including: deleting a preambular paragraph on the relevant work of the GoE; deleting a reference to requesting the Secretariat to facilitate the involvement of Parties in LADA activities; and deleting operative paragraphs on links between GoE and LADA, and on involvement of national focal points in LADA activities. MOROCCO, CUBA, CHINA and TANZANIA opposed the amendments. After consultations, the draft decision was adopted with compromises made in relevant paragraphs.

On traditional knowledge, BRAZIL and CANADA, opposed by the EU, suggested an amendment in an operative paragraph regarding the development of inventories of traditional knowledge. As consensus was not reached, the paragraph was bracketed. Regarding the protection of traditional knowledge, insertion of a new paragraph was proposed and agreed on. The draft decision was adopted with the bracketed text.

On the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, ISRAEL initially proposed detailing the findings of the Assessment, but agreed to restrict additions to a factual rendition of the outcomes of the Assessment. The draft was approved with minor amendments.

On benchmarks and indicators, CANADA introduced additional text, most of which was supported. The CST accepted a proposal by the G-77/CHINA to add a request to the Secretariat to facilitate the assimilation and development of region/country specific benchmarks and indicators. The draft was adopted as amended.

On improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, the EU suggested adding reference to a review of the future role of science and technology in implementation of the CCD, and recommended future work of the GoE, and to replace its Chair. NORWAY provisionally bracketed text detailing the priority activities of GoE. The EU proposed deleting reference to the UNCCD fellowship programme, a move opposed by the G-77/CHINA. The draft was approved, with brackets remaining.

On the programme of work of the CST, NORWAY and MOROCCO made minor additions. The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION (WMO) recalled its informal suggestion to add a broad listing of specific tasks, which received support from several delegations. The EU bracketed text referring to facilitation of thematic programme networks by the RCUs. Discussions continued late Friday night.

CONTACT GROUPS

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: The contact group on programme and budget chaired by Gerardo Guiza (Mexico) met in the morning, and a related draft decision was tabled by the Secretariat. Several delegations continued to urge the Secretariat to provide a report on its implementation of the auditor's recommendations for the biennium 2002-2003. A group of developed countries insisted on annexing the report to the decision, while a group of developing countries opposed this. Delegations agreed to insert paragraphs in this regard in the decision. The Secretariat circulated five documents in the afternoon as requested, including a report on the status of the implementation of the auditor's recommendations.

REVIEW OF THE CONVENTION: The contact group met throughout the day in an attempt to resolve issues relating to five draft decisions. Regarding strengthening the Convention implementation in Africa, the group was able to agree on a compromise text.

Regarding the consideration of necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention, there remained differences of opinion regarding whether the CST should play a role in directing financial resources.

Regarding improving communication and reporting procedures, the suggestion to form an open-ended informal contact group to discuss standardization of national reporting procedures was supplemented with proposed terms of reference for this group, for discussion.

As for mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention, one regional group of countries suggested inclusion of text that would encourage movement beyond pilot projects in implementation. Positions remained entrenched regarding the Convention's relationship with the GEF, and whether to "invite" or "request" it to collaborate.

The group read through the decision on collaboration with the GEF for the first time, and many countries were emphatic regarding the importance of the Memorandum of Understanding between the CCD and the GEF (MoU) contained within. One country was unwilling to re-open discussion on the MoU.

Discussions on outstanding draft decisions were deferred to Sunday, 23 October.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the first week of the COP came to a close, several countries have complained about the proliferation of parallel sessions, held concurrently, that have spread small delegations very thin, and may preclude their participation. In the contact groups, some delegates believed the ongoing wordsmithing may be symptomatic of a greater rift that exists between country blocs, as well as their conception of the CCD's mandate and its relationship with the GEF.

Delegates witnessed a lively discussion at the plenary's open dialogue session, where the exposition of local action experiences was well received, and NGOs' statements conveyed passion and conviction. However, some government delegates, while supportive of greater civil society involvement, regarded propositions to have NGOs granted greater official status within the UN system with some unease.