



CCD COP-7 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2005

COP-7 participants met in the special segment in the morning and afternoon to hear opening statements. The launching of TerraAfrica took place in the afternoon. The plenary met in an afternoon session to consider including an additional agenda item regarding the procedure for the selection of an Executive Secretary of CCD. Contact groups met to discuss: the programme and budget; the draft decisions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-4); regional coordination units (RCUs); and the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU).

SPECIAL SEGMENT

OPENING CEREMONY: Andrew Kiptoon, Permanent Representative of Kenya to UNEP, opened the special segment in the morning, which started with a cultural performance by Kenyan artists.

Grace Gathoni, a 12-year old student, delivered a message on young people's expectations and recited a poem emphasizing the role of education and training in combating desertification.

Abdulai Arbele, an elder from Rendille Community, Kenya, spoke on how desertification affects pastoralists' livelihoods and highlighted the impact of environmental changes caused by tree cutting on water and pastures for their livestock.

CCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo delivered a message from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, which highlighted the need for more concerted actions and financial resources to combat desertification. Noting that the UN General Assembly has designated 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, the Secretary-General urged parties to advance efforts to combat desertification, and said that it is time to give a major impetus to Convention implementation.

In welcoming delegates to the UN Office at Nairobi, UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer said that many people's livelihoods depend on ecosystem services, and that combating desertification is crucial in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

José A. D. Duque, Minister of Science and Technology and the Environment of Cuba and President of COP-6, called on countries to act promptly in order to achieve the objectives of the Convention, and stressed that "a better world is possible."

Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, said that political will, rather than financial resources, is the solution to the struggle against desertification, and emphasized its link with climate change.

Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources of Kenya and President of COP-7, stressed that the CCD is an important tool to achieve the objectives of the World Summit for Sustainable Development. He suggested empowering the organs of the Convention,

including letting CRIC function on a permanent basis, and urged the implementation of recommendations contained in the Joint Inspection Unit's report on the activities of the Secretariat.

Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya, welcomed delegates, and congratulated the CCD Secretariat on work done in forwarding the objectives of the Convention. He said the outcome of the session will have a direct bearing on Kenya and all other affected countries, and the achievement of the MDGs. He called for targeted research on land degradation, and increased financial and technical support for the NEPAD Environmental Initiative, as well as for action programmes at different levels. He noted that the main challenge lies in translating the obligations under the Convention into concrete actions, and urged the COP to adopt practical recommendations.

STATEMENTS BY UN AGENCIES AND REGIONAL GROUPS: In the afternoon, delegates heard statements by UN agencies and regional groups. The Global Environment Facility highlighted the potential global impact of land degradation, and said that the fourth phase of the GEF will further support the work of the CCD in this area. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) said that it is committed to support the CCD, and called upon stakeholders to join partnerships to commit new investment to the implementation of the CCD. UNDP called for a focus on the interlinkages of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and the MDGs, as well as a rights-based approach to addressing land tenure reform.

The CBD highlighted the consequences of rapid biodiversity loss to ecosystem services and the synergies between MEAs in areas linked to combating desertification. The UNFCCC described the close links that exist between climate change and desertification, and the importance of the upcoming UNFCCC COP-11 in Montreal.

CUBA, for the G-77/CHINA, stressed that the creation of economic opportunities in drylands is only a means to the greater goal of attaining social improvement. The UK, for the EU, noted that the CCD highlights links between poverty and land degradation, and said that it is a unique forum to disseminate best practices. He said that mainstreaming CCD objectives into national development plans will promote access to resources. The AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT stressed the impact of land degradation in Africa on food security, and said that developed countries had been unable to adequately support the Secretariat, and proposed that CRIC should become a permanent body of the COP.

SAUDI ARABIA, on behalf of the Asian Group, reported progress in the implementation of national action programmes in Asia, emphasized capacity building for addressing land degradation, and called on all developed countries and international agencies to provide assistance to affected countries.



ARGENTINA, for GRULAC, called for research on ecosystems to find solutions to dryland management and environmentally-friendly production systems for sustainable development. He urged developed countries to renew their commitment to the Convention and emphasized the importance of setting measurable targets and providing financial resources for the implementation of the Convention.

Soo-hwa Lee, Deputy-Minister of Korea's Forestry Service, affirmed the continued commitment his country has made to the CCD implementation, and expressed his country's interest in hosting COP-8.

LAUNCHING OF TERRAFRICA: The New Alliance to Combat Land Degradation in Africa (TerrAfrica) was launched in the afternoon. Introducing the initiative, President Musyoka described the TerrAfrica's focus on Sub-Saharan African countries.

President Musyoka then delivered a statement from Olukorede Willoughby, Deputy Chief Executive of NEPAD, which highlighted NEPAD's role in TerrAfrica, and on behalf of the African Union, called for support to combat land degradation in Africa.

Iyorcha Ayu, Minister of the Environment of Nigeria, noted that it is a new business model for the participation of key stakeholders and to channel investment in the region.

Laurent Sedego, Minister of the Environment of Burkina Faso, deemed the initiative a true partnership for collective efforts, and mobilization of additional funding.

Len Good, CEO & Chair, GEF, stressed that addressing land degradation requires coherent decisions at all levels. He said that the GEF will provide significant financial resources for the initiative.

Cyril Enweze, Vice-President of IFAD, emphasized that TerrAfrica builds a new paradigm in addressing land degradation through sustainable agriculture, partnership and cooperation, and said that TerrAfrica will contribute to improving livelihoods of the poor in Sub-Saharan Africa.

J. Warren Evans, Director of the Environment Department, the World Bank, highlighted the new dimension of TerrAfrica as a stage for partnership and collective actions in addressing land degradation, and mobilizing financial resources.

CCD Executive Secretary Diallo said that TerrAfrica is an alternative business model for sustainable agriculture, and it will help to better channel financing for land degradation. He called upon all stakeholders to engage in mainstreaming land degradation into development programmes.

PLENARY

President Musyoka chaired the afternoon plenary session, devoted to the consideration of the proposal to include an additional agenda item on the procedure of selecting the CCD Executive Secretary. JAMAICA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, appealed to the proponents to withdraw the proposal, while JAPAN supported it, noting that it aims to ensure a smooth selection process. The EU, together with the US, noted that the proposal was submitted to the Secretariat in compliance with the relevant rules of the CCD.

Noting a lack of consensus, President Musyoka suggested continuing consultations on the matter, and deferred it to the next plenary session.

CONTACT GROUPS

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: The contact group met throughout the day to discuss a draft decision on programme and budget for the biennium 2006-2007. Different alternatives were proposed regarding the text on currency fluctuations.

Regarding the assessment currency: many developed countries asked the COP to consider adopting Euro budgeting and a single currency system of assessment, starting from the 2008-2009 biennium. Many developing countries proposed to wait for the results of the group on JIU before making a decision.

On the 2006-2007 budget, a group of developed countries suggested text saying that the Secretariat did not prepare it according to the COP-6 decision. A group of developing countries opposed it.

On resources for CCD implementation, a group of developed countries preferred the text, saying that it does not automatically require a growing Secretariat budget, while a group of developing countries emphasized the need to concentrate resources on implementation.

On the issue of arrears, one delegation requested to replace "arrears" with "voluntary contributions". Many participants suggested "unpaid amounts due under the indicative scale of contributions". The paragraphs on unpaid contributions were bracketed.

Many developed countries suggested text saying that the decision on the size of the core budget as well as the minimum percentage of the indicative assessed contributions can only be taken by the COP. Many others suggested implementing the recommendations in the auditors' report.

REGIONAL COORDINATION UNITS: The contact group considered a revised draft decision on RCUs submitted by Chair Mohammed Ismail (Tunisia). The debate focused on endorsement of functions of RCUs and inclusion of their cost in the CCD's core budget. Due to disagreement, several participants suggested establishing an *ad hoc* working group to discuss the issue of RCUs' functions and make recommendations at COP-8. A comparative study on advantages of other existing mechanisms for regional coordination was also suggested, but no agreement was reached.

REVIEW OF THE CONVENTION: The contact group on review of the implementation of the convention met throughout the day to discuss issues relating to five draft decisions. Regarding 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, debate remained regarding the promotion and financing of benchmark and indicator development. Regarding improving communication and reporting procedures, one group proposed that informal working group meetings be held back-to-back with CRIC meetings to improve participation by smaller delegations. As for mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention, discussion centered around commitment on the part of developed countries to allocate 0.7 percent of their GNP as overseas development assistance to developing countries. The group continued discussion on collaboration with the GEF, with several countries opposing a request to make changes to the annexed Memorandum of Understanding. The group also discussed a draft decision on the programme of work for CRIC-5.

REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: The contact group on the JIU, chaired by Sem T. Shikongo (Namibia), met in the evening and held a general discussion. Delegates felt that it is a comprehensive report, which provides an opportunity to develop a new strategic vision for the Convention.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The resounding speech by Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki at the high-level special segment has added momentum to the meeting. According to some delegates, it helped offset the feeling that decreased political commitment was the reason COP-7 did not attract the number of ministers which some participants hoped for. African and other delegates also felt inspiration in the statement delivered by COP President Musyoka, who succinctly delineated a strategic roadmap for the implementation of the Convention.

The launching of TerrAfrica – an initiative regarded by many as a sturdy platform for cooperation and financing – marked another highlight of the day. One delegate was heard commenting on the GEF's promise of strong financial support to the initiative as an indication that partnerships and collective efforts might channel more resources to Africa after all.