

## UNCCD CRIC 5 HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY, 16 MARCH 2007

The fifth session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 5) continued on Friday, 16 March 2007. During the morning, participants completed the previous day's discussion on sustainable land management (SLM), and then addressed early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought. In the afternoon they addressed access to, and promotion of the transfer of technology, knowledge and know-how. A separate closed meeting of the Intersessional Intergovernmental Working Group (IIWG) on the ten-year strategic plan was also held during the afternoon and evening.

### REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Following the previous day's discussions on thematic topic 5 on measures for the rehabilitation of degraded lands and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought, the Secretariat introduced the achievements and challenges in this area.

### DISCUSSIONS ON SUSTAINABLE LAND

**MANAGEMENT:** The US and CUBA agreed that rehabilitating areas that are not yet fully degraded is less costly and more likely to result in recovery than focusing efforts on fully-degraded lands. CANADA highlighted several national sustainable land management initiatives, including for community pasture management and environmental farm planning.

In response to a question from Guinea-Bissau, panelist Ramon Cardoza, Mexico, explained that land rehabilitation programmes can be difficult to implement on some communal lands because the entire community using that land has to agree to the programme.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA noted that much of its population is engaged in subsistence living, and that slash and burn cultivation in forests is common, urging donors to extend support to his country. ERITREA advocated "putting farmers first" in efforts to address food security in developing countries, as farmers often make up the majority of the population. He added that although developing countries have a great deal of indigenous knowledge, they need support to transfer scientific knowledge.

URUGUAY noted his country's desire to gain access to clean technologies for small and medium-sized producers, and asked financing agencies and developed countries for help in this regard.

On a question from Guinea-Bissau, panelist Jack Wilkinson, International Federation of Agricultural Producers, responded that philosophical arguments on globalization are a distraction and that attention should be devoted to ensuring that producers achieve the maximum possible benefits from trade.

On national measures, CHINA outlined: a sustainable energy law; the introduction of high efficiency fuel stoves in rural areas; and the provision of machinery for pastoralists to rehabilitate grasslands. PERU described a natural resource inventory, and programmes for water-use licenses, protected areas and reforestation.

ARGENTINA highlighted the need for the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) to stay ahead of the UNCCD decision-making process, and urged the CST to consider the land degradation and rehabilitation aspects of biofuel production as an immediate priority. BELIZE recommended that the CST evaluate the potential impacts of imminent climate change on land management and degradation.

**PANEL ON EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS:** Naser Moghaddasi, Iran, described a study which found that 6.5 million hectares of land in Iran are susceptible to wind erosion. He reported that a drought early warning system has been developed and six indicators of desertification have been identified, namely precipitation, water flow, climate, soil, energy and vegetation. He pointed out the need for meteorological and geological data sharing and an integrated approach among different agencies.

Maryam Niamir-Fuller, UNDP, presented on rangeland degradation, an important factor contributing to desertification, with causes including: population growth; destruction of common property systems; increased density of livestock; and cultivation in marginal lands. She stressed the need to focus on policy reform, and outlined some sustainable rangeland management options, including: moving from a common land-use approach in which nobody is responsible for land management, to regrouping ranching individuals into cooperatives and communes; increasing pastoral mobility; developing insurance schemes; encouraging a diversity of land uses, including tourism; and developing sustainable biofuels, biogas and carbon sequestration above and below ground. She also recommended: developing sustainable and secure financing for land management; combining and sequencing financial resources for achieving UNCCD objectives in rangelands; and expanding the UNCCD thematic coverage from "ranching" to "sustainable rangelands."

**Discussion:** On national measures, BRAZIL highlighted a social and environmental atlas that assists with management of degraded areas, watershed management and early warning systems. JORDAN outlined a drought early warning system

allowing drought monitoring and the rapid formulation of workplans with the participation of all social and government sectors. BELIZE noted that his country's emergency early warning system, originally dedicated to tropical storm warnings, now also deals with floods and droughts.

TANZANIA described a land and water catchment management strategy, including: the relocation of pastoralists from degraded areas; addressing excess irrigation; a tree-planting campaign to rehabilitate degraded land; and awareness-raising activities.

In response to Tanzania's question on how to address land degradation caused by refugees, Niamir-Fuller said that UNDP is working together with the UN Refugee Agency to address this issue. Regarding cross-border movement, she said that the UNDP has implemented two successful projects in East and West Africa. She argued that forced relocation of refugees to prevent land degradation is unnecessary, and that mobility and alternative-livelihood options should be promoted.

CHINA asked Wilkinson how to raise small-scale farmer incomes without exposing farmers to market risk. Wilkinson replied that the World Bank and some countries such as Chile have developed systems to assess and reduce such risks. Niamir-Fuller said that unless risk issues are addressed, farmers will not be able to invest in rehabilitation, and advocated addressing this through policy change.

The WORLD INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE PASTORALISM held that mobile pasture systems are more productive than other systems, and advocated the use of traditional knowledge and management systems in grazing.

#### **KNOW-HOW AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER**

The Secretariat introduced the agenda item on the consideration of ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer for combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought, as well as of promoting experience sharing and information exchange among parties and interested organizations (ICCD/CRIC(5)/8).

**PANEL ON TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER:** Naik Sinukaban, Indonesia, presented on an agro-silvi-pastoral system introduced in degraded lands in Indonesia, featuring a small reservoir and rows of legume trees for fodder mixed with livestock and food crops, to provide farmers with a mixed income source that maximizes the natural synergetic relation of soil, plants, livestock and the atmosphere. He reported significant increases in farmers' income as a result of the system.

Israel Torres, Panama, presented a software mapping system, developed with international support, to monitor the environment in the humid tropics of Central America, highlighting the potential to establish a similar system in Africa. He explained that the interactive maps are useful to establish the expansion of the agricultural frontier and the existence of land degradation or forest fires, and to determine baseline data for decision-making on longer-term policy objectives for the fight against desertification.

Anna Luise, Italy, described ways in which Italy is promoting traditional knowledge, including through the establishment of an international center in Florence. She stressed the need to, *inter alia*: increase synergies between NCBs, research centers and national decision-making bodies; enhance cost-benefit analyses of actions to combat desertification as well as determine inaction costs; and harmonize terminology.

Pavol Bielek, Slovakia, presented his country's web-based soil and land information system, which maps satellite, soil, slope and plant data, enabling users to assess potential land use, productivity, and degradation issues. Describing the system as simple, inexpensive and effective, he encouraged development of similar systems in other countries.

Ismail Abdel Galil Hussein, Egypt, outlined the work of the Egyptian Deserts Gene Bank, a facility to increase the utilization of plant genetic resources from dry and desert areas. He

emphasized the potential contribution of heat-, drought- and salt-resistant plants to efforts to rehabilitate degraded land, improve food security and alleviate poverty. He also outlined training courses on collection, knowledge and use of desert plant genetic resources.

Luca Montanarella, European Commission (EC), stated that research programmes should be driven by the research needs of affected countries, and recommended that the CST assist in identifying such needs. He also emphasized the value of traditional knowledge, which he said must be applied alongside modern technology to achieve SLM.

**Discussion:** Pakistan, on behalf of G77/CHINA, appealed for full implementation of the commitment made at the Rio Summit regarding technology transfer, highlighting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. He called for: effectively implementing established partnerships and the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity Building; creating a supportive international enabling environment; narrowing the digital divide between developed and developing countries; developing regional and sub-regional networks and strengthening such cooperation; establishing information exchange systems and world-class research institutions to develop advanced technologies and share them with developing countries; developing and sharing traditional technology; renewing commitments by developed countries, international agencies and financial institutions; and strengthening South-South cooperation.

ZIMBABWE questioned the EC's approach to intellectual property rights and asked how poor communities can access technologies. The EC acknowledged that intellectual property rights can limit technology transfer in some cases.

ALGERIA noted that his country's activities in utilizing satellite information had incurred large costs and highlighted that access to technology is difficult without financial resources.

DOMINICA requested assistance to document the agricultural practices of indigenous communities in the Caribbean. BRAZIL cautioned that references to traditional knowledge dissemination should exclude traditional knowledge related to genetic resources, due to negotiations on access and benefit-sharing currently ongoing under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

ARGENTINA highlighted opportunities for South-South cooperation, including through centers of excellence, and noted the need to restructure the CST to accentuate the scientific component of the Convention.

MOROCCO highlighted the need for on-ground application of technologies by farmers, and CENESTA, an Iranian sustainable development NGO, emphasized the need to ensure that the technologies presented can be used for on-ground action by community farmers, in conjunction with local traditional knowledge. THAILAND described a local agricultural system designed to restore degraded land. South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, emphasized the need for an international enabling environment to address challenges regarding research capacity and access to technologies.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

The much-anticipated "secret" meeting of the IIWG on the draft ten-year strategic plan at the Brazilian Embassy went late into Friday night. Coming out of the meeting, attendees agreed that the overall spirit had been very positive. One participant commented that they worked on the timing and mechanisms for consultation and that, in spite of looming deadlines, the group is likely to finish its work on time. Another indicated that the next draft will incorporate comments received at CRIC 5 and that the current focus is on broad objectives, with more sensitive matters, such as those related to indicators, resources, and the role of financial mechanisms, likely to come up later in the process.