

## UNCCD CRIC 5 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 19 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 Monday, 19 March 2007. During the morning, delegates completed Friday's discussion on access to technology and know-how. Throughout the rest of the day, they addressed linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions, and drought and desertification monitoring and assessment. In the evening a Friends of the Chair group met to discuss the draft report of CRIC 5 to the Eighth Session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP 8).

### REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Discussions continued on thematic topic 7 on access by affected country parties, particularly affected developing country parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how.

#### PANEL ON KNOW-HOW AND TECHNOLOGY

**TRANSFER:** Viorel Bludjea, newly-elected Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), reported the nomination of science and technology correspondents, and a proposal for a fellowship program. He highlighted that the CST should be product-oriented, aiming to produce methodologies and tools to facilitate UNCCD implementation, and introduced the CST's Programme of Work, noting that work related to climate change and land degradation is a priority.

Alejandro Leon, on behalf of the CST Group of Experts (GoE), outlined national reports submitted by country parties. He noted that: most respondents presented their country profile and National Action Programmes; some failed to provide information on monitoring and early warning systems; many missed information on benchmarks and indicators; many reported a lack of financial resources and the need to enhance capacity building and technology transfer; and there was generally no cost-benefit or economic analyses or a scientific understanding of traditional knowledge.

The GoE's major recommendations are to: facilitate the development of benchmarks and indicators; reinforce monitoring and early warning systems and capacity building; strengthen coordination and synergies among conventions; and translate traditional knowledge into scientific understanding.

**Discussion:** SWAZILAND suggested that innovative sources of funding, other than the core budget, should be found to support the operation of the CST.

BRAZIL and INDIA supported the development of national, but not universal, indicators. KYRGYZSTAN advocated practical and economic indicators which can be applied in real conditions. ALGERIA stressed the need to move from process-oriented to outcome-oriented indicators. ARGENTINA urged the CST to consider a package of six indicators adopted in his region. CHINA noted that uniform indicators are difficult to develop, and suggested first developing a basic set of indicators that are relevant to all affected country parties, and then elaborating a flexible method for their use.

ZIMBABWE and GUINEA-BISSAU noted that many African countries have struggled with monitoring, benchmarks and indicators and suggested that countries with strengths in each area should be identified and their successes shared. INDIA and ALGERIA noted the use of their own satellites to monitor the impact of measures to combat desertification.

CST Chair Bludjea stated that governments must determine what indicators are needed, and that the indicators should then be institutionalized at the national level to permit their regional and global application. FUNDACION DEL SUR, speaking for a network of NGOs, lamented that the current structure of the CST impedes the effective management of scientific and technical knowledge, and said that the GoE should include experts from grass-roots, indigenous and NGO groups. He added that an indicator should be developed to measure participation.

#### PANEL ON SYNERGIES WITH OTHER

**CONVENTIONS:** The Secretariat introduced thematic topic 4 on linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies, requesting parties to comment on measures to improve synergies between the Rio Conventions.

Tarik-ul-Islam, Bangladesh, identified cross-cutting issues among different conventions as well as constraints to making use of synergies, including: low levels of awareness; lack of synchronization among national policies; lack of financial resources; and political instability.

Conrod Hunte, Antigua and Barbuda, noted the need for national governments to implement the various conventions' mandates in a holistic manner, and described his country's mechanism for coordination among different ministries and agencies.

Uriel Safriel, Israel, noted that not all linkages entail synergies, and highlighted the need for further research on the topic, including on possible links between soil erosion, desertification, climate change and biodiversity loss. Noting the

need for research to clarify the magnitude and possible synergies of remedial measures, such as afforestation, he proposed a concerted research effort on linkages and their synergy potential and said the Global Network of Dryland Research Institutes could take the lead.

Ivana Bikova, Czech Republic, presented on national coordination of commitments under approximately 25 environmental agreements and protocols.

**Discussion:** CHILE said that work under the UNCCD should be recognized as a process for climate change adaptation and mitigation. ARGENTINA pointed out that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) working groups on adaptation and mitigation are already studying links between climate change and biodiversity issues, and said that this work must be taken into account by the UNCCD. Safriel called for more sophisticated interaction with the IPCC, suggesting that the UNCCD better define and elaborate its work on land degradation and desertification issues for the IPCC. INDIA highlighted the importance of synergies with the Ramsar Convention, explaining that wetlands are a buffer against droughts and desertification and adding that work on synergies should not lead towards the convergence of conventions, but should focus on minimizing overlaps. CANADA cautioned that the UNCCD must achieve the same level of scientific strength as the biodiversity and the climate change conventions, if synergies between the three conventions are to be achieved.

ITALY, ARGENTINA and CHINA highlighted reforestation projects that achieve synergies by sequestering carbon, restoring degraded lands, and creating job opportunities and environmental awareness in local communities. ALGERIA described synergistic pilot projects, noting, as challenges, conflicts of interest amongst ministries and lack of participation.

NIGER reported on the establishment of a high-level national coordination council and BURKINA FASO described her country's single framework for coordination between the Rio Conventions.

CHINA noted that synergy should not be pursued as an end in itself, but as a means to achieve greater efficiency in sustainable development and, with SOUTH AFRICA, said synergies should be pursued at international, national and local levels. BRAZIL noted that making use of synergies can achieve economies of scale, and recommended harmonizing benchmarks, indicators and information outputs. MEXICO suggested rainfall capture and carbon sequestration in soils as areas where synergies could be considered.

The Gambia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, warned that the UNCCD cannot be implemented in isolation, and called for linking the three Rio Conventions and giving each one equal weight, and a shared approach to implementation at programme and project levels.

SOUTH AFRICA introduced her country's programmes for achieving synergies between the Rio Conventions through collaboration with local government, civil society, research institutions and the private sector.

URUGUAY and CÔTE D'IVOIRE stressed that synergy requires a clear framework for partnership, including integrating implementation of the conventions with economic development and poverty eradication activities.

The US and BRAZIL held that, when developing synergies, the mandate of each convention should be respected. TUNISIA advocated the integration of principles and actions of the three conventions into national social and economic development plans, and recommended that the three conventions should be

hosted and guided by a single ministry in each country to ensure synergies. ASPAN held that the synergy issue is related to development, as well as consumption and production patterns.

The Secretariat highlighted the linkage between land degradation and adaptation to climate change, and noted the potential to tap adaptation funds under the climate change Convention. Responding to a question from South Africa, he explained that the CST was requested by the COP to further examine synergies and present their results to COP 8.

**PANEL ON DROUGHT MONITORING:** The Secretariat introduced thematic topic 6 on drought and desertification monitoring and assessment, noting the need for harmonized benchmarks, methodologies and indicators for monitoring drought and its impacts.

Chunlin Zang, China, outlined his country's system to monitor land use, vegetation type, soil moisture and aridity in order to identify the status and trends of desertification as a basis for decision making. He noted the need to study further the relationship between desertification and climate change, and to strengthen the links between macro-level monitoring and local participation.

Wilfredo Alfaro Catalan, Chile, spoke on monitoring the causes and socioeconomic and environmental impacts of drought in his country. He said that in addition to monitoring drought, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of responses to drought, and listed three indicators: the amount of public investment and government support received; the geographic area covered by management responses; and the number of users who have benefited.

Giorgi Kolbin, Georgia, proposed the establishment of a drought management center for the Transcaucasus to provide timely information to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Robert Stefanski, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), presented on the WMO's efforts to improve drought monitoring and assessment, showcasing their recent activities and case studies in Africa and the US. He emphasized that causes of droughts can be meteorological, agricultural or hydrological and each needs a separate set of indicators.

### CRIC 5 REPORT TO COP 8

In preparation for this agenda item, Chair Moore convened an open-ended Friends of the Chair group in the evening to work on the draft report of CRIC 5 to COP 8, explaining that the draft is an organized compilation of CRIC 5 participants' recommendations to plenary. Participants considered and agreed on the sections of the draft on participatory processes and legislative and institutional frameworks.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

As visibly-rested delegates detailed their weekend's tango and football experiences, some reflected on the results of Saturday's first meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group (AHWG) on reporting, noting the election of Ramon Frutos of Belize as Chair and indicating that the structure of the report and schedule for presentation to CRIC 6 are now agreed. In general, participants expressed satisfaction at the group's intention to design a reporting format that will catalyse parties' progress by ensuring that national reports are not just used to convey national experiences to the Secretariat and other parties, but also to spur coordination among agencies and stimulate the Convention's in-country implementation.

Meanwhile speculation rose over the inclusion of an item on the new Executive Secretary in the Bureau meeting's agenda for Tuesday morning, and the corridors buzzed with rumors of two new candidates lining up for the post.