

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 met in a morning plenary session to complete the election of COP officers, following which they convened in the Committee of the Whole (COW) and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) for the remainder of the day.

### PLENARY

COP 8 Vice-President Jiří Hlaváček invited delegates to select the remaining vice-presidents for the COP. Hamdi Aloui (Tunisia), Kenneth Roach (Trinidad and Tobago) and Ariel Rusignol (Uruguay) were elected by acclamation, and join the vice-presidents selected Monday: Sem Shikongo (Namibia), Siddharth Behura (India), Khaled al-Sharaa (Syria), Jiří Hlaváček (Czech Republic), Yurie Kolmaz (Ukraine), and Mary Rowen (US). Hlaváček then designated Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) as Chair of the COW. The designation of the Rapporteur was left pending.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Committee, chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria), adopted its agenda and organization of work as contained in paragraph 11 of the Provisional agenda and annotations (ICCD/COP(8)/1), without amendment. The COW also agreed to consider the CRIC agenda on the comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat together with document ICCD/CRIC(6)/2 by the same title. The Secretariat introduced the agenda items on the follow-up to the JIU report and strategy development to foster the implementation of the Convention (ICCD/COP(8)/10 and ICCD/COP(8)/INF.5), and on regional coordination units (ICCD/COP(8)/13). The IIWG Chair, Sem Shikongo (Namibia), introduced agenda item 10, the report, based on the review of the IIWG of the report by the JIU, including how best to address the recommendations therein (ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.1) and the draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) (ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.2). Discussion focused on strategy adoption, relocation of the Global Mechanism (GM) to Bonn, the regional coordination units (RCUs) and the creation of a contact group.

Many delegations supported the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan. UKRAINE, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe, supported the proposals on re-organization. To operationalize the strategy, MOROCCO, CHILE, IRAN and others called for a priority mid-term programme with measurable targets and quantitative indicators, including on

programme costs and financial contributions. INDIA called for adequate, substantial, additional and predictable resources, and strengthening the RCUs. ARGENTINA said that aligning the strategy and the UNCCD would change how the UNCCD works. BRAZIL stressed the need to adopt the strategy by consensus. ZIMBABWE said a results-oriented approach requires adequate Secretariat resources. AUSTRALIA said adoption of the strategy must precede discussion about "how to get there."

THAILAND supported decentralized implementation of the strategy. LESOTHO called for speeding up resource mobilization. CHINA and SAUDI ARABIA stressed the need for an effective mechanism for its implementation. The US supported adopting the strategic plan, while recognizing that it contains elements that are not consistent with existing decisions. UGANDA, on behalf of the African Group, said the draft plan is in line with the Group's expectations, but noted it has no budget, timeline and priority actions, and recommended that the COP prepare and adopt a costed implementation plan through identifying priority actions for the first four years. TUNISIA emphasized the need for institutions for, and financing of, the strategic plan. SWITZERLAND said the plan is a useful instrument for policy dialogue nationally and internationally, urged its linkage with other plans such as those on poverty reduction and supported resource provision. HAITI emphasized collaboration with local populations. DRYNET, on behalf of the European NGOs, supported the strategy and noted that it places drylands in the development, and not simply environment, framework.

Several countries, including QATAR, MEXICO, CHINA, SAUDI ARABIA, GABON, HONDURAS and HAITI, supported strengthening the RCUs. The EU suggested viewing the RCUs within the wider context of the strategic direction. UGANDA, on behalf of the African Group, urged COP 8 to strengthen and institutionalize RCUs as a tool to support implementation of NAPs, RAPs and SRAPs. PARAGUAY, on behalf of the Latin America and the Caribbean Group, emphasized the need for a relevant regional institutional architecture. KENYA called for a firm COP 8 decision on the RCUs, as it has been pending since COP 3. SOUTH AFRICA stressed coordination between UNCCD institutions, and new terms of reference for the RCUs. Objecting to the RCUs, JAPAN said decentralization is not the way to optimize resources. The US emphasized efficiency and effectiveness of the RCUs.

BRAZIL, SWAZILAND and others called for the GM's relocation to Bonn. Other countries, including GABON and TANZANIA, emphasized the need for the Secretariat and the GM to work together. CÔTE D'IVOIRE called for a study on the proposed relocation. MAURITANIA and TUNISIA urged

that the GM be strengthened before considering relocation. GUINEA proposed assessing the value added of the GM's relocation. ETHIOPIA, stressing complementarity, said merging the GM and Secretariat is "not the best approach." LEBANON disagreed on the separation of the GM from IFAD in light of IFAD's significant resource contribution. GUINEA-BISSAU and RWANDA suggested adopting a decision to integrate the GM within the Secretariat. SYRIA said the GM had not met expectations, and suggested establishing a new financial mechanism to be placed within the Secretariat.

SWAZILAND proposed the immediate establishment of a contact group to consider the cost implications of implementing the strategy, and relocating the GM, and was supported by many delegations, including the African and Latin America and the Caribbean Groups.

Responding to delegates, IIWG Chair Shikongo explained the results-based management approach and supported early establishment of the proposed COW contact group to complete the IIWG's outstanding work. Before adjourning, COW Chair Anaedu observed there was no objection to establishing a contact group, and delegates only differed on its timing. He said a short COW session would be convened Wednesday morning, 5 September, to decide on the contact group and how it would proceed.

#### **COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

CST Chair William Dar (the Philippines) opened CST 8 and urged the Committee to focus on a science, rather than process-driven, approach and to not "shy away" from reforms.

**ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRS:** The Committee elected as Vice-Chairs Michel Sedogo (Burkina Faso), Uladzimir Sauchanka (Belarus), Richard Escadafal (France), and Maria Nery Urquiza Rodriguez (Cuba). Rodriguez will also serve as Rapporteur.

#### **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION**

**OF WORK:** The Secretariat introduced the CST agenda (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/1), including a rearrangement of topics on the Group of Experts' report. PORTUGAL, on behalf of the EU, requested that implications of the IIWG on the CST be considered. Chair Dar said this suggestion would be presented to the COP Bureau. The CST adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/1) as orally revised.

#### **IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CST: FINAL REPORT OF THE**

**GROUP OF EXPERTS:** The Secretariat introduced the Group of Experts' (GoE) final report (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2, Add.1-9). GoE Coordinator Alejandro León (Chile) discussed the GoE's work. ITALY, for the EU, noted that the GoE's mandate was broad and said, if its mandate is extended, it should develop the three priority items identified by COP 7: benchmarks and indicators, communication and information strategy, and land degradation and poverty strategy. Delegates then addressed specific GoE studies, led by the expert who facilitated each study.

Maurizio Sciortino (Italy) presented "Communication strategy: development of a mechanism for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network – THEMANET" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.2). He recommended that the CST mandate the finalization of the prototype with a suggested budget of €75,000. Many parties acknowledged the importance of the tool, while others sought clarification on, *inter alia*: links to other databases, topics covered, languages used and inclusion of traditional knowledge. NORWAY, SAUDI ARABIA and FRANCE questioned who would cover maintenance and running costs. Others emphasized that the desired impact of THEMANET must be clarified, including the target audience. The US urged parties to consider prioritizing which GoE projects to endorse, given limited funds.

Anders Hjort-af-Ornäs (Sweden) presented "Integrative assessment methodology for poverty and land degradation" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.3). The study developed an integrated methodology through which to identify linkages between large numbers of projects or information. He said the next steps include: identifying and ranking projects that could use the appraisal methodology, developing a database, carrying out rapid surveys and turning data into information sets. In response to questions about how the study countries were selected, he emphasized that the study focused on developing the methodology. SAUDI ARABIA suggested that the CST and CRIC should meet simultaneously. An NGO suggested using indicators identified by the UK's Department for International Development and additional indicators, such as a "spiritual" indicator.

Alejandro León presented "Identification of perceived gaps between biophysical, socioeconomic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification, their causes and ways of eliminating them" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.7), containing recommendations to promote demand-driven science and technology transfer. Many parties commended the GoE's work, and ITALY noted his country's creation of a traditional knowledge center. Several parties emphasized the lack of resources for acquiring and disseminating traditional and modern knowledge and for technology transfer. BRAZIL highlighted traditional knowledge ownership rights. KENYA asked about the intellectual property rights associated with technology transfer. ECUADOR asked how the report accounts for the role of politicians when determining the application of modern knowledge. NGOs stressed the need to involve communities throughout the project cycle.

Elena Abraham (Argentina) presented "Benchmarks and indicators for monitoring and assessment of desertification" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1). She explained that the report proposes the identification of a small set of basic, commonly-used indicators relevant to all countries, followed by the identification of regional indicators, and eventually country-specific approaches. Delegates called attention to the resources necessary to create and implement benchmarks and indicators and highlighted related country-level projects. BRAZIL expressed concerns with the adoption of models that are not specific to a country, stating that they could be a constraint on sovereignty. PORTUGAL, for the EU, suggested discussing indicators and benchmarks in the IIWG context. NGOs emphasized the need to involve stakeholders. ROMANIA recalled that this topic gave the CST 6 Bureau "headaches," and proposed relying on existing indicators.

Delegates received a copy of "Opportunities for Synergy Among the Environmental Conventions: Results of National and Local Level Workshops," which was produced in relation to the GoE work on "Development of synergy with other related conventions" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.4). BRAZIL introduced a related project, for which his country had developed indicators to demonstrate how the three Rio Conventions could be used to reach one objective.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

While statements in the COW settled the question about whether a contact group would be established, the timeframe for its establishment was taken up in the corridors and in informal group consultations following the early adjournment of the COW on Tuesday afternoon. Participants suggested that the dilemma relates to whether the contact group should be established before or after the CST and the CRIC have met. Those favoring late establishment reportedly argue that outstanding issues of the CST and CRIC could also be deferred to this group, while those favoring its early start are said to be concerned that important issues may otherwise be considered too late in the session.