

UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 met in a morning meeting of the Committee of the Whole (COW), followed by the first and second meetings of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 6). The Committee on Science and Technology (CST 8) also met throughout the day. An open-ended contact group met during the afternoon.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) opened the COW, which proceeded to establish an open-ended contact group, chaired by Vice-President Sem Shikongo (Namibia), to consider the ten-year strategic plan and Regional Coordination Units (RCUs), without re-opening agreed issues. Anaedu also announced plans to set up a contact group on the budget.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Chair Franklin Moore (US) opened CRIC 6.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Delegates adopted the provisional agenda (ICCD/CRIC(6)/1), except the sub-item on the comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat (ICCD/CRIC(6)/2), which the COW has taken over. It also adopted its organization of work contained in Annex II of the agenda.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF CRIC 5:

Chair Moore introduced the CRIC 5 report (ICCD/CRIC(6)/11), drawing attention to its seven recommendations. INDIA sought clarification, and Chair Moore agreed, that the report is a compilation of delegations' views.

REPORT ON ENHANCED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE CONVENTION: The Secretariat introduced the report on enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention (ICCD/CRIC(6)/3), and Simone Quatrini of the Global Mechanism (GM) introduced options for financing targets related to combating land degradation and desertification (ICCD/CRIC(6)/3/Add.1).

The EU said monitoring and assessment should be done in the context of the ten-year strategic plan. BRAZIL objected to global targets that would burden developing countries without financial support from developed countries. NORWAY pledged continued support to the CRIC.

Noting that the GM did not benefit all countries, MALI said that sub-Saharan Africa was not mentioned in the GM's presentation. GUINEA-BISSAU said the GM's criteria for

determining support were unacceptable. NIGERIA, supported by URUGUAY, observed a misconception that the GM fundraises for countries, and added that despite its commendable work, the GM was not operating in line with its mandate. CÔTE D'IVOIRE expressed dissatisfaction with the GM and called for a revision of its approach. KENYA stressed focusing on the GM's value added. SENEGAL suggested conducting an in-depth analysis regarding the GM. GHANA, TUNISIA and MOZAMBIQUE commended the GM's contribution to their countries' efforts.

ETHIOPIA urged the Secretariat and the GM to elaborate their expected contributions to the ten-year strategic plan. THAILAND asked when the GM would support the region's action programmes. Summarizing, Chair Moore noted that many delegations addressed the need for a single work plan and this plan's significance in relation to the seven thematic areas of the Bonn Declaration.

GLOBAL MECHANISM: In the afternoon, the CRIC considered the item on the Global Mechanism (ICCD/CRIC(6)/4). Christian Mersmann, GM Managing Director, outlined the GM's achievements and its cooperation with governments, UN agencies and international financial institutions, especially the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Many parties agreed that the report and presentation clarified confusion related to the GM. Some thanked the GM for its support and elaborated on their interactions with it. Others, including ALGERIA, NIGERIA, the EU, GUINEA and NORWAY, noted their current overall satisfaction with the GM's work. ALGERIA and CHAD said that relocating the GM is unnecessary. HAITI said that relocation should be subject to careful analysis. NIGERIA said their dissatisfaction lies not with the GM itself but with the fact that, while the climate and biological diversity conventions were initially granted "funding mechanisms," the UNCCD only received a "broker," and thus has less funds.

SOUTH AFRICA called on the GM and the UNCCD Secretariat to work together. The EU recommended a joint work programme between the Secretariat and the GM. ARGENTINA said the UNCCD has two managers, the Secretariat and the GM, which leads to overlaps. He argued that the GM should be integrated within the Secretariat. NIGERIA agreed that integration would help align the GM and Secretariat's work, and expressed dissatisfaction that language regarding the integration "vanished" in a "non-transparent" manner at IIWG meetings following CRIC 5.

BURKINA FASO asked the GM to strengthen its work in facilitating South-South cooperation. SWAZILAND, BRAZIL and CHILE urged reinforcement in the GM's ability to build capacity, with BOTSWANA specifying that this is needed to mobilize domestic resources, supported by international funding. IRAN and PAKISTAN highlighted the importance of harmonizing all UNCCD institutions. SYRIA cautioned that support from the GM is not reaching enough countries.

Responding to interventions, Mersmann suggested that insufficient cooperation between, rather than overlapping work by, the GM and Secretariat exists, and that the ten-year strategic plan addresses this issue.

FINANCING BY AGENCIES: The Secretariat and the GEF introduced the document on financing of Convention implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions (ICCD/COP(6)/5 and ICCD/CRIC(6)/5/add1). Discussion will continue Thursday.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Secretariat explained that agenda items pertaining to the CRIC would be addressed first, to enable the CRIC to review the CST's recommendations as soon as possible. The CST then discussed the report of the Group of Experts (GoE), the summary of Bureau activities, the UNCCD fellowship programme, the review of the GoE, and the priority theme.

Alejandro León (Chile) presented the synthesis of the analysis by the GoE of the reports submitted by parties of the fifth session of the CRIC (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/3) and "Analysis by the GoE of the reports submitted by Parties to the fifth session of the CRIC" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/INF.2). PAKISTAN urged the CST to help countries develop and understand socioeconomic indicators. KENYA stressed that indicators must be location-specific and suggested that, because many indicators already exist, usage should be emphasized. SUDAN recommended that the CRIC streamline the content and format of national reports. MADAGASCAR, BURKINA FASO and SUDAN highlighted that national development research and strategic plans often implicitly incorporate desertification mitigation. Several countries questioned how to reflect this work in national reports.

UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten suggested that CST Chair Dar coordinate with the COW and CRIC Chairs to ensure that the CST's perspective is taken into account in draft decisions on issues that the three bodies are addressing.

Kazuhiko Takeuchi (Japan) presented the study on methodologies for the assessment of desertification at global, regional and local levels (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.6). ECUADOR, MOROCCO and SPAIN discussed their monitoring system experiences. CHINA emphasized the need to link farmers to research findings at the global level, and suggested a role for the CST in linking the three levels.

Castillo Victor Sanchez (Spain) presented "Guidelines for early warning systems" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.8). Sanchez noted that no desertification early warning system is fully implemented yet, despite their potential for desertification mitigation, and described actions needed to overcome limitations. The UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction said it is willing to assist in the mobilization of resources to promote activities in the area of early warning systems to mitigate the effects of drought and land degradation.

Alejandro León (Chile) presented "Guidelines for updating the *World Atlas of Desertification*" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.9). The US said that relying on benchmarks and indicators may not be appropriate, given the debate on them under other agenda items. He also suggested creating a web-based publication, which could be updated as necessary.

CST 7 Chair Viorel Blujdea (Romania) presented the summary of activities of the Bureau during the intersessional period (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/4), including recommendations to improve the Bureau's functioning. TURKEY suggested

that the Rio Conventions develop a cooperative focus on soil conservation. KENYA noted that the anonymous nature of the CST reports is a disincentive to scientists, and supported synchronizing CST and CRIC meetings and national reporting for the Rio Conventions.

Chenchu Norbu (Bhutan), CST 7 Vice-Chair, presented the report on a UNCCD fellowship programme (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5). Several delegates highlighted their countries' own training programmes. ISRAEL said it would offer funding for ten post-graduate students to match UNCCD funding. The US inquired about the fellowship programme's funding source.

CST 7 Chair Blujdea presented "Review of the functions and the work of the GoE, and procedures for the renewal of the membership of the GoE" (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/6). The EC, on behalf of the EU, proposed conducting the CST in a conference format that is open to high-level scientific input, focused on a specific thematic topic, and involves a lead institution with relevant expertise. Many speakers noted that the GoE did not have funding to conduct its work, and that a new body should have funding. BRAZIL asked if the experts would be country-appointees. WorldVision International said NGO involvement should be incorporated into the EU proposal. JAPAN supported the EU proposal and emphasized the need to strengthen the relationship between the GoE and the Thematic Programme Networks.

On the priority theme, effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation: assessment, field experience gained, and integration of mitigation and adaptation practices for livelihood improvement (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/7 and ICCD/COP(8)/CST/MISC.1), BULGARIA presented a study on climate change in her country. She detailed water, soil and wind erosion and other environmental challenges faced by Bulgaria, along with efforts to address them. This discussion will continue on Thursday morning.

OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP

Contact Group Chair Shikongo opened the first meeting Wednesday afternoon. The Group agreed to: follow the standard procedures for the participation of observers in its work; focus on all issues relating to the implementation framework, including regional coordination, its mechanisms and plans, and the priority implementation activities; and produce one draft decision for submission to the COW, covering the adoption of the strategy, the implementation framework and recommendations for follow-up.

Despite repeated expressions of frustration by delegates about whether the starting point of the preliminary exchange of views on regional coordination units would be the exchanges from the COW or the draft strategy document, delegations commented that: regional coordination, regional units and regional programmes are different concepts; the urgency for regional institutions and their specific models varies; institutions are needed to implement the UNCCD-mandated regional programmes; RCUs designed eight years ago may be irrelevant today; and institutions operating optimally should be supported. The group will reconvene Thursday morning.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Following the CRIC's afternoon discussion on the GM, some delegates indicated that they sensed a change in mood, with most statements indicating more satisfaction with the GM. Some suggested that the GM Managing Director's presentation, on the heels of several side events on Tuesday and Wednesday, may have helped dispel confusion regarding the Mechanism's mandate and activities. Others suggested that praise came mostly from countries currently receiving, or hoping to receive, support from the GM. Several countries believe the question of the GM's relocation will be dropped, but the GM's relationship with the Secretariat will remain on the agenda.