

UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in morning and afternoon meetings of CRIC 6 and CST 8. The COW met in the afternoon. By the end of the day, four contact groups had been established. The contact group on the ten-year strategic plan met throughout the day, while contact groups on the CRIC and CST commenced in the afternoon. A contact group on the budget was created, but will commence Friday morning.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: In the afternoon, UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten introduced the report on the programme and budget (ICCD/COP(8)/2/ and Add.1-11). He noted that the proposed budget for the biennium 2008-2009 is a maintenance budget, outlined reasons for its leanness, and offered possible implications of results-based planning, programming and budgeting. CHAD suggested prioritizing activities in the event of a further decline of the dollar relative to the euro and, together with SWAZILAND, urged parties to pay arrears. COW Chair Ositadinma Anaedu said he would guide the contact group on the programme and budget until a chairperson is selected.

REVIEW OF THE CRIC: The Secretariat introduced the item on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention (ICCD/COP(8)/3). LESOTHO supported the existence of the CRIC. SWAZILAND and GAMBIA supported renewal of the CRIC's mandate and stressed the importance of considering outcomes from the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan. CHINA endorsed making the CRIC a permanent body and strengthening its role and function, including the review of the ten-year strategic plan's implementation. BRAZIL suggested simultaneous or back-to-back intersessional CRIC and CST meetings, objected to holding a CRIC session during COP sessions and, with CANADA, proposed that CRIC meetings be reduced to five days. CANADA suggested having two extra days for regional meetings. NORWAY said that sustainable land management is the foundation for sustainable development, rural growth and poverty reduction.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION FINANCING MULTILATERAL AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS:

CRIC Chair Franklin Moore invited statements on financing the Convention by multilateral

agencies and institutions. Many countries highlighted projects submitted to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that have not obtained funding. EL SALVADOR asked why funding for a PDF-B project approved in GEF-3 was withdrawn in GEF-4. CAMBODIA, CHILE, TANZANIA, GUINEA-BISSAU, TURKMENISTAN and PAKISTAN thanked the GEF for its support, while other countries requested GEF funding. NIGERIA complimented the GEF on its reforms. HAITI said the GEF should focus on areas where land degradation is most acute. Several Central American and African countries urged the GEF to prioritize funding for their regions.

PANAMA, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, NIGERIA, BURUNDI and MOROCCO emphasized that GEF financing for the UNCCD is insufficient and lower than for other Conventions. These countries called for equal GEF funding across conventions. SAUDI ARABIA said the GEF must be considered as the UNCCD's primary funding mechanism.

The US noted that GEF funding depends on co-financing and that the ability to obtain such co-financing influences subsequent replenishments. BURKINA FASO asked the GEF and developed countries to facilitate resource mobilization from the private sector.

PARAGUAY, on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean Group, and CHINA encouraged the GEF to improve communication with national focal points. KENYA, TANZANIA, GUINEA-BISSAU and GUATEMALA highlighted difficulties in obtaining timely support from the GEF.

Responding to questions, the GEF described its criteria for funding projects, noting that under GEF-4 a more equitable approach, taking into consideration the UNCCD's special focus on Africa, has been achieved. He added that the GEF re-examined its backlogged pipeline of projects following its fourth replenishment, resulting in the withdrawal or renewal of some projects. The GEF then introduced its current reform and new strategy.

REPORT OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP:

Bongani Masuku (Swaziland) introduced the report of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group (AHWG) on improving the procedures for communication of information (ICCD/CRIC(6)/6 and Add.1). The EU supported the report's recommendations but called for more practical reporting procedures. CANADA said the AHWG did not meet its terms of reference.

Chair Moore announced that six draft decisions will be discussed in a contact group, chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland). He then suspended the CRIC, to allow the contact group to conclude its work.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

PRIORITY THEME: Mongolia and Mexico offered papers on their countries' environmental challenges, research and lessons learned related to the CST's priority theme on the effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation. The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) presented a review of the connections between climate change and desertification, and their effects on poverty and food insecurity. TUNISIA emphasized the importance of traditional and local knowledge in identifying strategies to combat desertification. ICELAND reported on the International Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change, and highlighted the Forum's recommendation to ask the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to develop a special report on this issue.

M.V.K. Sivakumar, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), reported on a WMO- and UNCCD-organized workshop on climate and land degradation (ICCD.COP(8)/CST/8 and ICCD/COP(8)/CST/INF.1), the papers from which have been published in *Climate and Land Degradation*. ROMANIA noted that this workshop provided an example of involving high-level institutions with relevant scientific experience in the CST.

ROSTER: The Secretariat introduced the paper on the roster of independent experts (ICCD/COP(8)/9), highlighting the need to update the roster. No comments were offered.

REPORT OF THE GoE: On the GoE report on case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for users in implementing the Convention (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.5), H.P. Singh summarized several case studies, including one in which rehabilitation efforts led to a 400% return. EGYPT noted the importance of such research in demonstrating to policy makers the economic value of science. FRANCE underscored the value of comparative analyses of case studies.

FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE CST: Chair William Dar invited delegates to discuss the priority theme for CST 9, and noted that the draft ten-year strategic plan contains relevant recommendations. Speakers agreed with the need to align the work programme with the ten-year strategic plan and offered options for the theme. JAPAN proposed: benchmarks and indicators, monitoring and assessment and early warning systems; synergies among the Rio Conventions; and capacity development for local people. SOUTH AFRICA suggested facilitating the harmonization of national reports, early warning systems, and managing traditional knowledge. SPAIN proposed examining the socio-economic costs of not combating land degradation and desertification. ARGENTINA, supported by BRAZIL, said implementation of the ten-year strategic plan would require the RCUs and highlighted a role for them in the CST's work. FRANCE suggested that the CST could guide the Thematic Programme Networks. NORWAY noted the need to provide a full outline of the anticipated CST 9 agenda items.

The EC, on behalf of the EU, distributed a draft decision to: call for the organization of the CST in a scientific and technical conference-style format; focus on one thematic topic; and involve an institution with relevant expertise. MEXICO proposed that the CST promote the evaluation of future scenarios, as is done by the IPCC. He also suggested developing a concrete work programme, as is done by the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. PERU supported Spain, emphasized the importance of connecting the regional thematic programmes with the CST, and highlighted the issue of traditional knowledge. BURKINA FASO supported the EU proposal and suggested involving NGOs. The WMO suggested holding a scientific meeting prior to the CST to develop recommendations for

parties' consideration. H.P. Singh (GoE) suggested traditional knowledge as a theme. BRAZIL agreed on the importance of traditional knowledge and said any discussion should include benefit sharing and be in the context of negotiations in the CBD. He said the CST's and UNCCD's work must remain country-driven and should not lose sight of budgetary implications. CST Chair Dar appointed Canada and Romania as chairs of a contact group.

OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CST

The Contact Group on CST discussed the priority theme and EU-proposed session format. Participants developed the proposal to consider biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment to support decision-making in land management. On the EU proposal, participants discussed format and budget options. Small drafting groups were established to develop related draft decisions. The CST is expected to consider these and additional draft decisions Friday.

OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC

Chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland), the CRIC contact group met from 6:00-7:00 pm. Delegates decided that parties would submit written comments on the draft decisions to the chair for discussion on Friday.

OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – STRATEGIC PLAN

The group chaired by Vice-President Sem Shikongo (Namibia) concluded their preliminary exchange of views on the RCUs, coordination between the Secretariat and the GM, and the implementation framework. Delegates continued to diverge on what material to use as a basis for their deliberations, but agreed to submit their written regional positions on all three issues to the Chair so that he could prepare a draft text for the group's consideration on Friday afternoon.

On GM-Secretariat coordination, policy problems identified include activity overlap and confusion about whether the GM or Secretariat provides leadership to the UNCCD. Some delegations offered "practical" solutions such as medium-term and biennial work plans with milestones, building GM and Secretariat capacity, developing a joint work programme, clarifying the division of labour, and monitoring by COP. Comments on the GM highlighted its: unequal and insufficient support to parties; role evolution; mandate interpretation; and implementation of decisions from its Facilitating Committee.

On the elements for the implementation framework, many delegations used content from the draft ten-year strategic plan. While some emphasized that adopting the ten-year strategic plan requires a visible budget for activity implementation, others cautioned against conflating a strategy to implement the Convention with one to combat desertification.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Progress in the strategic plan contact group came close to a stand-still Thursday afternoon due to persistent disagreements over the text that should form the basis for this group's work. Delegates suggested that the attempt to re-open the section on implementation reflects some delegates' dissatisfaction with the COP 8 draft text, specifically the unexplained "disappearance" from the final IIWG report of language suggesting as a future direction "the possibility to merge the GM and the Secretariat into a single institution."

Meanwhile, there are rumors that the in-coming (Gnacadjia) and out-going (Diallo) UNCCD Executive Secretaries may arrive in Madrid over the weekend to address delegates during the High-Level Segment.