

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 adopted eight draft decisions during a morning meeting of the Committee on Science and Technology, which were subsequently adopted by the COP during an afternoon plenary meeting. The contact group on programme and budget held its first meeting during the afternoon, while contact groups on the ten-year strategic plan and CRIC met during the day and into the night. The contact group on the ten-year strategic plan reconvened on Sunday afternoon.

### COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

CST 8 Chair William Dar asked delegates to consider the eight draft decisions developed by a contact group that convened Thursday evening and Friday morning. Draft decisions on the final report of the Group of Experts, programme of work of the CST, and networking of institutions, agencies and bodies were adopted without amendment.

The draft decision on the roster of independent experts was adopted with the replacement of a reference to "women" with a reference to ensuring "gender balance." On the draft decision on a UNCCD fellowship programme, SYRIA objected to referring to specific institutions, and proposed deleting the preambular reference to the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research, and the decision was adopted as amended. On the draft decision on the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project, WorldVision International proposed that LADA also take into account the needs of "stakeholders," and the decision was adopted as amended. On the functioning of the CST, the draft was revised to clarify that the reference to "holding one intersessional meeting and a shorter meeting period that will be held in conjunction with the COP" referred to the possibility of two meetings.

On the draft decision on the reshaping of the operation of the CST in line with the IIWG ten-year strategic plan recommendations, ARGENTINA and BRAZIL offered amendments to specify that the proposed conference-style format would be party-led, rather than "jointly" organized by the CST Bureau and a lead institution/consortium. An additional revision

was made to request that the Secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, consider mechanisms to secure additional funds. EU-proposed text to encourage the lead institution/consortium to assist in the mobilization of resources was also added.

CST Chair Dar said the session had involved a spirited reshaping of the CST to bring new life to the Committee and asked delegates to help it achieve "new heights."

### PLENARY

COP 8 President Cristina Narbona opened the plenary and noted that Vice-President Kenneth Roach (Trinidad and Tobago) would serve as Rapporteur. COW Chair Ositadinma Anaedu reported on the Committee's work, saying that two contact groups had been established on the implementation of the strategic plan and on programme and budget. CRIC Chair Franklin Moore said the CRIC had completed all the agenda items, except item 6 (programme of work for CRIC 7), and a contact group had begun work to consider the Committee's six draft decisions.

CST Chair Dar submitted the CST's eight draft decisions (ICCD/COP(8)/L.7-14) for plenary consideration, which the plenary adopted.

### OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

Following the plenary, delegations convened in a contact group to present statements on the programme and budget. The Secretariat offered initial remarks on the impact of the falling value of the dollar on the Secretariat's budget. Some delegations focused on the need to link the budget to the programme, including the outcome of the ten-year strategic plan and CRIC contact groups. Additional comments included: welcoming the proposed zero nominal value increase; expressing satisfaction with the proposed budget; objecting to the proposed percentage increase in the budget; questioning the UNCCD's failure to shift to Euro accounting; objecting to the Secretariat's tendency to move towards becoming an implementing agency; inquiring about the large line-item for staff training; and urging the Secretariat to move towards results-based management. Chair Anaedu said the group is expected to meet again Monday, at which time a draft text will be available.

**OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC**

Chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland), the CRIC contact group met in the morning and reconvened following plenary in the afternoon until 10:00 pm for an initial reading of its six draft decisions. One delegation requested deleting texts related to trade and market regulations throughout the decisions, because they are being discussed in other forums, and on land tenure, which they argued is a national issue. Another delegation urged that references to “affected parties in developing countries” be followed by “and other eligible parties” in the relevant sections.

Many paragraphs in draft decision 1 on strengthening the implementation of the Convention in all regions were bracketed with no amended text proposed because some regional groups were still discussing the draft text. One delegation suggested including a paragraph under “strategic orientations” inviting all parties to strengthen existing RCUs.

Some countries suggested that “developed country parties,” rather than “all parties,” should be called on to: support participatory natural resource management; build capacity for NAP implementation; and commit special funds to promote participation of NGOs, CBOs and other elements of civil society. Other countries argued that collaboration between developed and developing country parties must be reflected in the text.

Parties disagreed over whether to refer to “biofuels,” “sustainable biofuels” or “ecologically sustainable biofuels” in the context of developing new and renewable energy sources in draft decision 2 on necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention.

On draft decision 3, mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention, some countries proposed preambular text reflecting the responsibility of developed country parties, while other countries argued that resource mobilization requires partnership between developed and affected country parties.

Text calling for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change effects in developing country parties to be funded under Climate Change Funds was bracketed on draft decision 4 on collaboration with the GEF. Parties discussed how to bring the ten-year strategic plan to the attention of the GEF and whether or not the GEF could be asked to facilitate access of affected country parties to funding mechanisms related to land degradation and desertification. Several delegations noted that this is not the GEF’s responsibility, but rather the responsibility of the affected country parties. Text related to the Adaptation Fund was bracketed.

One delegation recommended replacing the word “conservation” with “sustainable use” or “sustainable management” in reference to forests, biodiversity and land and water conservation throughout draft decision 5 on activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships and synergies with other relevant conventions and relevant international organizations, institutions and agencies.

One delegation distributed an alternative text to draft decision 6, on improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP. The alternative text calls on the Secretariat

and the GM to seek external support to develop reporting guidelines prior to CRIC 7, for consideration at the CRIC. Several delegations welcomed the idea in principle.

The contact group agreed to reconvene on Monday to continue discussing the draft decisions, following regional group consultations.

**OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – STRATEGIC PLAN**

The open-ended contact group chaired by Sem Shikongo (Namibia) met on Friday and Sunday afternoons to consider its draft decision on the strategy and implementation framework, including GM-Secretariat coordination and the RCUs. It endorsed the Chair’s proposed structure of the draft decision, noting the need to eventually agree on language on the budget and placement of references to the GEF, taking into account the CRIC’s outcomes. The decision will include preambular paragraphs and operative paragraphs on the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan, CST, CRIC, GM, Secretariat, GM-Secretariat coordination, GEF, performance monitoring, and “costing of the strategy.” The Chair’s proposal requests the GM and Secretariat to include indicators of successful cooperation in their joint work programme, and pending the availability of funds, the development of mechanisms to suit coordination in the different regions, and to submit proposals to COP 9. In their preliminary comments on the structure of the draft, some delegations called for a provision on an independent external audit of the GM, but others observed it would be expensive, would be prudent to do it sometime after the implementation of the joint work programme, or should focus on the relationship between the GM and Secretariat. Most elements will be derived from the relevant sections of the ten-year strategic plan.

The group then established a “Friends of the Chair Group” (FOCG), with at least two representatives from each region, to develop a draft text. The FOCG met Friday evening and early Sunday afternoon, and developed a first draft of the decision on the draft elements, based on the Chair’s proposed structure. The open-ended contact group started negotiating this draft later Sunday afternoon, except for the provisions on the GM-Secretariat coordination and RCUs, which are linked and remain under consideration by the FOCG. Chair Shikongo also presented a draft text with proposals for the operative paragraphs of the decisions, which will be considered next.

**IN THE CORRIDORS**

Some delegates have observed that, compared to past COPs, there is relatively little happening “in the corridors” related to the COP 8 decisions. Some attribute this to the late organization of some regional groups, which has slowed movement towards negotiation. They did, however, highlight that the emergence of draft decisions on Friday demonstrates the significance of COP 8 for its subsidiary bodies.

Nonetheless, behind-the-scenes discussions were reported surrounding the question about COP endorsement of the GEF as the institutional home for the US\$6 billion dollar climate change adaptation fund. Observers suggest that there are a number of reasons why some have opposed the endorsement, including because they think the UNCCD is not the appropriate venue to take such a decision, it prejudices the institutional host, the current main beneficiaries from the GEF fear they might lose out, and successful lobbying from competitor institutions.