

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in morning and afternoon meetings of the Committee of the Whole to discuss relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations, follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), outcome of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), and relations between the Secretariat and its host country. The contact group on programme and budget met in the afternoon and the contact groups on the ten-year strategic plan and CRIC convened during the afternoon and into the night to negotiate draft decisions.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS:** On the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies (ICCD/COP(8)/4 and ICCD/COP(8)/MISC.1), the UN Forum on Forests highlighted areas for collaboration with the UNCCD. ARGENTINA and NORWAY called for closer work between the scientific bodies of the Rio conventions. ARGENTINA emphasized the need for technical and political linkages, in particular between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC.

TURKEY said synergies should focus on soil management. Additional synergies were suggested with: Ramsar (SOUTH AFRICA and NORWAY); UNFF (NORWAY and SAINT LUCIA); World Heritage (SOUTH AFRICA); and UN-Water (CANADA). NORWAY, BRAZIL and AUSTRALIA said the distinct mandates of the conventions must be respected. AUSTRALIA emphasized including priorities, timelines and milestones in collaborative programmes and said the UNCCD should not start a work programme on climate change.

Delegates highlighted linkages between the goals of the UNCCD and reducing poverty (SOUTH AFRICA, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, TANZANIA and ECUADOR), sustainable forest management (KENYA) and poverty, forests and water resources (CHINA). IRAN highlighted the ongoing process on national capacity self-assessment.

Parties suggested promoting synergies at the programme, local, national and/or regional levels and between national strategies. ISRAEL said on-the-ground cooperation is required before synergies are developed. The G-77/CHINA, TANZANIA, INDONESIA and COLOMBIA stressed the need for support to promote synergies.

ARGENTINA, SAINT LUCIA, GHANA, QATAR, ECUADOR and MOROCCO highlighted projects that promote synergies within their countries, with GHANA and ECUADOR thanking the GM for its support, and GHANA thanking Canada, their *chef de file*. UNEP highlighted its projects on harmonized and on-line national reporting, knowledge management for biodiversity conventions, and Issue-Based Modules.

**OUTCOME OF WSSD:** On follow-up to the outcome from the WSSD that is relevant to the Convention, and preparation of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Committee on Sustainable Development (CSD) (ICCD/COP(8)/5 and Add.1), countries noted the opportunity to raise the profile of the UNCCD at CSD 16 and 17, which will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification. SAUDI ARABIA urged the Secretariat to make adequate preparations. KENYA and CHINA noted the opportunity to raise awareness of the UNCCD in the global arena, with CHINA emphasizing the potential to address funding problems. Among the issues recommended for CSD consideration were: the consequences of inaction and benefits of addressing land degradation (SOUTH AFRICA); where and when to relieve land from pressure (ISRAEL); an evaluation of official development assistance (BRAZIL); means of implementation (G-77/CHINA); and mining and urbanization (ZIMBABWE). BRAZIL said all options on agriculture must be compatible with WTO provisions. The EU highlighted the contribution that the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan could make to the CSD.

**IYDD:** On the outcome of the IYDD (ICCD/COP(8)/11), ALGERIA, supported by SYRIA, JORDAN, the NGO Cuban Association of the UN, SAUDI ARABIA, TUNISIA and the G-77/CHINA, proposed calling on the UN General Assembly to declare 2010-2020 as the decade of deserts and desertification. The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC reported on the Fifth Latin America-Africa Forum, highlighting the benefits of South-South cooperation. Additional IYDD activities discussed included: "Villages on the Front Line," eight documentaries that aired on BBC World television during 2006 (GM); an international conference on women and desertification (CHINA); a scientific conference on the future of drylands (TUNISIA); a film on deserts and desertification in the Arab world (AMU—League of Arab States); selecting deserts and desertification as the theme for World Environment Day and producing *Global Deserts Outlook* (UNEP); and sponsoring a training workshop (EGYPT).

**HOST COUNTRY:** On the report on relations between the Secretariat and its host country (ICCD/COP(8)/12), GERMANY thanked the Secretariat for its review of relations and looked forward to meeting the new Executive Secretary to discuss the possibilities of continued cooperation.

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

Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) chaired the afternoon meeting of the contact group on the programme and budget. The Secretariat introduced a draft decision, highlighting paragraphs: authorizing the Executive Secretary to notify the parties of their contributions for 2008 and 2009 in euros; deciding to introduce the euro as the accounting currency from 2010-2011; requesting the Executive Secretary to include, in addition to the proposed budget for 2010-2011, two alternative scenarios maintaining the core budget at the 2008-2009 level at 0% nominal growth and 0% real growth in euros; and adopting the indicative scale of contributions for 2008 and 2009. Participants expressed a wish for a more focused and shorter draft decision, requested the Secretariat to streamline it in line with the priorities identified in the strategic plan, inquired about the percentage of the staff cost in the budget, and expressed concern that the average expenditure per person under different items such as salary, travel and training is higher than for the other Rio convention secretariats.

#### **OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC**

The contact group on the CRIC began a second reading of their draft decisions. On draft decision 1 (strengthening Convention implementation), they struggled to find a balance between affected and developed country party responsibilities. Developing countries accepted a provision inviting them to establish an enabling environment for sustainable land management, but proposed that land tenure and governance be removed from the list of ways in which this environment could be created. The change was adopted.

Discussions also focused on ways to incorporate the concept of traditional knowledge in the decisions, with one delegation requesting the inclusion of protection and sharing of benefits related to traditional knowledge. Some delegations urged the inclusion of integrated water management when referring to sustainable land management, with one party noting that water issues encourage support, but this reference was rejected.

After discussion, parties agreed to separate paragraphs related to financial resources from developed country parties and multilateral organizations, and from the GEF. They agreed to invite developed country parties and multilateral organizations to “mobilize and provide substantial financial resources from all sources” and to reserve text related to “adequate, timely and predictable financial resources” for a paragraph on the GEF. As of 8:30 pm, delegates were still discussing draft decision 1.

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

The contact group chaired by Sem Shikongo (Namibia) met in the afternoon and late into the night to discuss a draft decision on the ten-year strategic plan (SP) and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention. Shikongo circulated the first full draft decision, containing 48 paragraphs. He reported agreement on the preambular paragraphs that recognize the primary responsibility of parties in delivering the objectives of the Convention and underline the importance of the efficient implementation of the Convention in addressing desertification and land degradation. Shikongo noted that while the “Friends of the Chair Group” had agreement on the provisions on the RCUs, agreement on the Secretariat-GM coordination is pending.

Delegates reached agreement on several elements. They agreed on a decision requesting all parties to operationalize the implementation of the SP in the context of their national priorities in the spirit of international solidarity and cooperation and to report progress made towards this at COP 9. Delegates deferred discussion of the request that the Secretariat aid parties, where appropriate, to mobilize resources to support the realignment of their NAPs with the SP.

The decision requests the CST to: prepare, in collaboration with its bureau and that of the COP, a costed two-year work programme consistent with the SP and to consider it at CST 9; act on a COP 8 decision to realign its work and on reshaping the CST in line with the SP; and advise the COP on how best to measure progress on the strategic objectives of the SP. Further, it proposes that the CST present the work programme to COP 9 for consideration and adoption, and decides that the CST 9 focus theme should be biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation.

The decision determines that the CRIC is the body responsible for reviewing and monitoring implementation of the SP, requests the CRIC to prepare a multi-year programme of work that is consistent with the SP, calls for an agenda item on this subject for CRIC 7, and calls for finalizing proposals on various aspects of performance monitoring for consideration at COP 9. The CRIC is also requested to address its methodological format at CRIC 7, but discussion of a proposal deciding on a predominantly interactive format was deferred.

Discussion of the elements concerning the GM was deferred to allow some groups to consult on the proposals that: request the GM to revise its existing results-based management approach in line with the SP and to present its proposed work plan to COP; urge it to mobilize resources needed by affected country parties; and focus on the efficient and effective delivery of its core functions, including the priorities laid out in the SP.

#### **AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS**

The Ad Hoc Group of Experts (AHGE) considered procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation (ICCD/COP(8)/7) and annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures (ICCD/COP(8)/8). The Secretariat noted that the two issues have been pending since COP 2. Delegations commented that since implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and the CRIC’s future are still under discussion, consideration of the items is premature. The Secretariat was requested to prepare two draft decisions, including paragraphs: deferring the consideration of the two items to COP 9; inviting parties to submit their views to the Secretariat; and requesting the Secretariat to prepare two documents to be submitted to the next COP. The AHGE will consider the draft decisions Tuesday.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

While the “budget battle (BB)” commenced in the contact group on programme and budget, the potential for long discussions could be felt in the corridors. One delegate made it clear that his government objected to any increase of the Secretariat’s budget, while another delegation preferred a small increase if the strategic plan is adopted and a framework is formulated for its implementation. Other delegations supported deciding the programme first before talking about the budget. Several developing country parties said the Secretariat should be provided with adequate funds to implement the programme. One delegation said his regional group will meet tomorrow to discuss how to avoid a repeat of the BB experience at COP 7.