

## UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in morning and afternoon open dialogue sessions with non-governmental organizations to discuss participation, gender and climate change. The contact group on the CRIC completed its work during a morning session. The contact group on programme and budget met throughout the day. The contact group on the ten-year strategic plan convened during the morning, with the discussion continuing in an afternoon "Friends of the Chair Group."

### PLENARY

**INCLUSION OF NGOs WITHIN THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COP:** COP 8 President Cristina Narbona opened the fourth plenary meeting of COP 8. UNCCD Officer-in-Charge de Kalbermatten noted the value that such open dialogue sessions could have at the national level, said the Secretariat endeavors to facilitate the participation of NGOs in an effective and transparent way and relies on NGO networking systems, and highlighted that the Joint Inspection Unit recommended improving NGO participation, and welcomed ideas to do so.

Steven Mweya (Uganda) moderated the discussion on participation. Thuli Makama (Yonge Nawe, Swaziland) said participation requires access to relevant information and adequate and predictable resources, among other things. Patrice Burger (ENID – European Networking Initiative on Desertification), donning a white mask with tape over the mouth to signify "the hypocrisy of the meeting," noted that, while the Convention contains 22 references to participation, visions of what it implies vary. Evelyn Chaves (Asociación Coordinadora Indígena y Campesina de Agroforestería Comunitaria Centroamericana, Costa Rica) discussed NGO networking activities within the Latin American and Caribbean region. Makama said NGOs' demands include: participation and clearly-defined roles in the UNCCD's institutions; NGO involvement in follow-up actions on the ten-year strategic plan; and creation of a working group to consider these demands.

Discussants proposed authorizing the Secretariat to designate a youth focal point, creating an information clearinghouse, inviting parties to include at least one NGO in their delegations, and considering the modalities for NGO participation at COPs. COP 8 President Narbona noted that, of the 800 civil

society organizations (CSOs) accredited with the UNCCD, 349 representatives are at COP 8, with almost half representing Spanish CSOs. She highlighted the importance of the Aarhus Convention, and said she would promote NGO participation in her role as COP President.

Mark Biedchareton (France) moderated the panel on gender. Dilcia García (Asociación Cubana de Producción Animal, Cuba) emphasized that women take an unequal share of the burden of desertification and called on parties to create a network of women researching natural resource management to identify traditional approaches for incorporation in the work of the CST. Jacqueline Nkoyok (University of Douala, Cameroon) stressed the value of women's traditional and local knowledge, highlighted the value of micro-aid for them, and suggested that international bodies such as the GM and GEF should contribute in this regard. Yunuen Montero (Fundación IPADE, Spain) highlighted the need to open spaces to ensure that women's voices are heard.

During the discussion, one delegate called for research to determine how market access and free trade increases land degradation. Others highlighted national and regional projects supported by various donors that involve women in combating desertification.

Octavio Pérez Pardo (Argentina) moderated the discussion on climate change and reminded participants that his delegation initially proposed holding such open dialogue sessions. Sina Damba (AFAD-RIOD-Africa, Mali) said the panel would focus on the human dimensions of climate change, in particular migration. Vore Seck (CONGAD-RIOD-Africa, Senegal) elaborated on climate change-induced migration, especially among nomadic populations, and outlined its link to land degradation. Emmanuel Seck (ENDA-TM, Senegal) presented a case study of land rehabilitation in the Niayes region of Senegal, concluding that NGO research can benefit parties in policy development. Silvia Picchioni (ASPAN-RIOD-ALC, Brazil) noted the high environmental and social costs of unsustainable consumption.

During the discussion, one delegate highlighted country efforts to mobilize resources for biofuel development in developing countries. Another urged parties to recognize that agrofuels have a negative impact on rural livelihoods and do not address desertification. Participants also: asked delegates to recognize pastoralist rights and the role that pastoralism plays in sustainable natural resource management; suggested

integrating NGO research into CST work; highlighted civil society participation in government decision-making related to the UNCCD; and stressed the role of NGOs in disseminating targeted information on climate change, adaptation and mitigation. One delegate lamented the poor attendance of government delegates at the open dialogue, but said it was better than at COP 7.

COP 8 Vice-President Hlaváček urged NGOs to ensure that their governments address convention synergies in the lead up to UNFCCC negotiations in Bali in December.

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

Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) chaired this contact group in the morning and co-chaired it with Jozef Buys (Belgium) in the afternoon. On the preamble, delegates agreed to merge three paragraphs on exchange rate fluctuation and adopting euro budgeting; add a new paragraph on taking note of the ten-year strategic plan; and delete many of the paragraphs in the original draft. On the operative paragraphs, delegates agreed to, *inter alia*: authorize the Executive Secretary to notify the parties of their contributions for 2008 and 2009 in euros; decide to introduce the euro as the accounting currency from 2010-2011; adopt the indicative scale of contributions for 2008 and 2009 based on the UN scale of assessment; express appreciation to the Government of Germany for its contribution to the Secretariat; and authorize the Executive Secretary to review, in the 2008-2009 biennium, the Secretariat's structure and allocation of posts in light of the ten-year strategic plan. Delegates did not agree to establish a separate fund for the costs associated with adopting the euro accounting system. A new paragraph was proposed encouraging the Secretariat to consider options for becoming carbon neutral. One delegate argued that the Secretariat's budget should be maintained at zero nominal growth in US dollar terms, but another delegation objected. Anaedu said that the group would discuss the figures during future meetings.

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

The contact group chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland) completed its second reading of six draft decisions at 2:00 am Tuesday morning and resumed work at 10:00 am to address remaining bracketed text. All text related to RCUs was left bracketed and will be revisited pending the outcome of the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan. Delegations agreed to delete a reference to traditional knowledge in draft decision 1, on strengthening the implementation of the Convention, because it will be debated at Convention on Biological Diversity meetings later this year.

Delegations decided to eliminate decision 2 (necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention).

Some delegations urged that reference to the ten-year strategic plan be included in draft decision 4 on collaboration with the GEF. A bracketed paragraph was included to this effect.

With regard to draft decision 6 on improving procedures for communication of information and the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP, delegates agreed to request "the Secretariat and GM" to develop draft reporting guidelines before CRIC 7, but disagreed on whether to call on "the Secretariat and the GM" or "the Secretariat with support from the GM" to develop the draft report. The bracketed text will be revisited following consultation with the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan. Delegates also agreed to retain text on

seeking external support to complete the draft report. The contact group concluded its work at 12:30 pm, with Chair Masuku thanking delegations for exchanging "words not blows," and submitted the draft decisions to the CRIC Chair.

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

Having concluded, on Monday evening, the first reading of the draft decision on the Secretariat and GEF, the contact group chaired by Sem Shikongo (Namibia) drafting the decision on the ten-year strategic plan (SP) and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention completed a first reading of the remaining elements concerning civil society, performance monitoring and indicator development, and costing of the SP. These elements remain bracketed and were referred to a "Friends of the Chair Group," which met in the afternoon.

On a proposal requesting the Executive Secretary to consult with CSOs in the elaboration of selection criteria for their participation at UNCCD events, delegates discussed its feasibility and its singling out of elements in the SP.

On performance monitoring, the draft, *inter alia*, proposes a decision for COP 9 to adopt the reporting guidelines for the performance monitoring of parties and Convention bodies, and for the conduct of a mid-term evaluation. Delegates diverged on the: use of "monitoring" as a concept; reference in a consensus decision to the non-consensual Annex 2 of the SP; actors bound by the reporting guidelines and indicators, and whether the latter are developed at the local or global levels; role of the GM whether as advisor on, or developer of, the reporting guidelines; and form a proposed mid-term evaluation takes, and the body responsible for it.

On SP costing, the draft: requests the Convention bodies to prepare budget proposals and resource mobilization strategies for their work plans; encourages parties to provide resources for NAP alignment with the SP; and urges parties to prioritize SP implementation in their budgets, and various actors to provide adequate, timely and predictable financial resources for the SP. Delegates called for: a political commitment of resources for the SP; the use of "resource based-budgeting" within the resource-based management approach; broadening the invitation on resource provision to non-parties; and focusing resource mobilization on affected parties.

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

The *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts met briefly to consider draft decisions on procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation, and on annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures. Delegates proposed adding to the draft text a request that the Secretariat prepare options for the Terms of Reference regarding a multilateral consultative process on procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation. The group will meet again Wednesday.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Following the plenary session with NGOs, one delegate said that the open dialogue left no question about NGOs' desire to engage in the UNCCD process. Others have noted the growing number of NGOs that are included on country delegations, which makes them less visible but provides them a greater opportunity to make input to the decision drafting process. Participants also noted that the large number of side events and exhibits have provided a useful venue for the exchange of ideas. Noting that many country respondents were NGOs on their country delegations, one skeptical observer wondered whether NGOs may end up dialoguing with themselves during these sessions.