

UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS:

WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in a morning meeting of the Committee of the Whole and an afternoon ministerial round table, which discussed desertification and adaptation to climate change. The contact groups on programme and budget and the CRIC, and the Friends of the Chair Group on the ten-year strategic plan, met throughout the day.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

RULE 47: COW Chair Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) opened the meeting and the Secretariat invited delegates to consider a draft text for Rule 47 (voting majority required for decisions to be adopted) (ICCD/COP(8)/6). BRAZIL, supported by SAUDI ARABIA and CANADA, said consensus is the best method for multilateral organizations and did not support decision-making procedures by voting. Chair Anaedu noted that there was no objection.

MINISTERIAL ROUND TABLE ON DESERTIFICATION AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

COP 8 President Cristina Narbona chaired a ministerial round table during the afternoon. Several speakers congratulated the UNCCD's Executive Secretary-designate, Luc Gnacadja, who was seated alongside them at the dais. Many speakers looked forward to the discussions and outcome of the December UNFCCC meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

Laurent Sedego, Minister of Environment and Quality of Life, BURKINA FASO, noted that desertification hinders development in his country, is linked to poverty, and causes increased conflict. He called for a framework for dialogue at the international and regional levels to mobilize funding to address the linked issues of desertification and climate change.

Juan Mario Dary Fuentes, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, GUATEMALA, highlighted work on energy efficiency in his country, noting its role in reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He said that expanding private and public investments and integrating risk considerations related to climate remain key challenges.

Patrizia Sentinelli, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, ITALY, suggested that an instrument on drought and access to water would enhance the international community's treatment

of these issues, and said the Italian government is willing to host a world conference on the right to water and combating desertification.

Highlighting the recent extreme climatic swings in the Caribbean, Ligia Dastro de Doens, General Administrator, National Environment Authority, PANAMA, emphasized synergies between the three Rio Conventions and elaborated Panama's ecosystem management approach to conservation.

Humberto Rosa, Secretary of State, Ministry for Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development, PORTUGAL, said all financing sources, including private, should be considered and ODA should be linked to sustainable development goals. He highlighted the EU's proposed carbon emission reductions, contingent on whether others make related commitments, and stressed the need to reshape the approach to international environmental governance.

SAMOA's Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Faumina Liuga, highlighted progress in, and funders of, Samoa's NAP, which was completed in 2006. He noted the challenges of climate change for small island States, and urged the UNCCD to focus on the issue.

Cristina Narbona, Minister of Environment, SPAIN, said there should be progress towards a new model of governance, supported developing a UN Environment Organization, and said existing instruments should be taken advantage of, such as in relation to climate change and forests.

Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, said "political will, not any amount of institutional reform," would enable the three Conventions to deliver, and flagged four areas of potential synergy between the UNFCCC and UNCCD: reforestation and land management; adaptation; education, awareness raising, information and science; and mitigation.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reported that the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice is developing guidelines on how to include climate change in all CBD work programmes and called for the development of adaptation tools.

Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, stressed the value of observation and early warning systems, capacity building in information dissemination, and integrating risk prevention in policy making in the context of the Conventions' synergies.

Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja highlighted the UN University's recent study on climate change and desertification, which called these issues among "the greatest challenges of our time." He noted the need for political will at every level and for bringing in new actors, including the private sector.

During the discussion, GUINEA highlighted the need for agricultural technologies to curb greenhouse gas emissions. MOLDOVA welcomed the calls for synergy and said he was looking for UNCCD implementation partners. EGYPT urged financing for climate change adaptation and the ten-year strategic plan, for reactivating South-South cooperation, and offered to provide training in Africa on plant genetic engineering to aid combating land degradation. CHAD expressed a desire to meet with the CBD Executive Secretary. CUBA recalled the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and said sacrifices must be made by donor countries. SAUDI ARABIA emphasized that desertification affects all countries. IRAN stressed the benefits of an ecosystem management approach in drylands initiatives. HAITI called on the international community to support the phase down of climate change impacts. To realize synergy between the Conventions, SYRIA called for an integrated implementation framework. POLAND highlighted afforestation and said it would emphasize forest management when it hosts UNFCCC COP 14 in Poznan in December 2008. TURKEY stressed soil conservation. KENYA asked about the causes for the lack of political will.

OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

Co-chaired by Jozef Buys (Belgium) and Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria), the contact group met throughout the day. A revised draft decision based on Tuesday's discussion was distributed. The group first discussed the Supplementary Fund. One delegation stressed the need to restructure the Secretariat and several delegations said that the Secretariat budget should be adjusted in line with the ten-year strategic plan. Another delegation said that the COP should not micro-manage the Supplementary Fund.

The group discussed a note from the CST Chair to the Chair of this group that describes the financial implications of the CST's decisions. The Secretariat offered clarifications on the budget implications associated with CST activities, including the fellowship programme, LADA project, CST Bureau meetings, and CST ordinary sessions. One delegation said that, since these financial implications will be the result of the COP decisions, delegates should accept them. Several delegations said the budget should be discussed when they have the outcomes of the other contact groups.

The group also discussed the budget for the GM (ICCD/COP(8)/2/Add.2). The GM presented the budget, explained its staffing requirements and answered delegates' questions. One delegation urged the group to not dwell too much on the details or micro-manage the budget. Co-chair Buys said the GM budget would be included in the budget of the Secretariat and discussed further. He concluded the meeting by stating that he expected feedback from the groups on the ten-year strategic plan and the CRIC on Thursday.

OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC

The contact group chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland) met briefly in the morning and agreed to reconvene in the afternoon to consider two additional draft decisions submitted to it by the COW. They completed a first reading of draft decision L.16 on follow-up to the WSSD and preparation for CSD 16

and CSD 17. Parties disagreed on whether they should request the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD to influence the work programme for, or the outcomes of, CSD 16 and CSD 17, as well as the level of detail they should provide the Executive Secretary in this regard. Text on this issue remains bracketed.

The contact group began discussion of draft decision L.15 on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist in the review of the implementation of the Convention. CRIC Chair Franklin Moore (US) explained that all decisions related to the CRIC, except for the CRIC 7 programme, had been passed to the CRIC contact group from the contact group on the ten-year strategic plan to facilitate completion of work. All parties agreed on the desire to renew the CRIC's mandate, however they could not agree on whether or not to make it a permanent subsidiary body of the COP. Several parties suggested renewing the CRIC's mandate until COP 9, in order to provide time to establish Terms of Reference for its establishment as a permanent body thereafter. One delegation emphasized that many developing countries view the CRIC as the "heart" of the Convention and urged parties to "make a statement" in this regard. The delegation suggested making the CRIC a permanent body, provisional on the adoption of its Terms of Reference at COP 9. Parties agreed not to draft Terms of Reference at COP 8 but reached no further consensus. The group will reconvene on Thursday.

IN THE CORRIDORS I

The "Friends of the Chair Group" on the ten-year strategic plan was locked in closed-door negotiations all afternoon Tuesday and all day Wednesday. During this period, the group reportedly focused predominantly on seven decision elements concerning Secretariat-GM coordination. Some report that delegates were near consensus, with the only outstanding issue being the proposal to continue supporting the "existing RCUs." Reports suggest that the other two issues that were of interest are a proposal requesting the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the GM, to review the regional proposals and means for operationalizing them, and a proposal to conduct an external independent evaluation of the GM. Several delegates expressed optimism by Wednesday evening that there would be rapid movement Thursday to reach agreement on the proposals that the open-ended group "parked" when they handed over the draft to the Chair's "Friends."

IN THE CORRIDORS II

While the budget discussion has reportedly gotten off to a slow but cordial start, some have expressed concern about whether the constructive atmosphere will continue as the interlinkages between contact groups are addressed. Some delegations feel that the budget negotiations should commence when they have the outcomes of the other contact groups, especially those of the group on the strategic plan. However, one delegate pointed out that waiting to do so could end in late night talks on Friday. Many expressed their hope that efforts to coordinate with other groups to get information of the possible financial implications of those groups' outcomes would be carefully managed.

Meanwhile, delegates seemed positive about the "low-key" introduction of UNCCD Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja to the COP, noting that "he played his politics right" since the round table was not "his" forum, but a forum for the ministers. Gnacadja reportedly arrived in Madrid over the weekend to "scope the landscape" and is working through a long list of groups and individuals to consult.