

UNCCD COP 8 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2007

Delegates to UNCCD COP 8 convened in a High-Level Segment from 10:00 am to 9:30 pm. The contact group on programme and budget and the Friends of the Chair Group on the ten-year strategic plan met throughout the day and, alongside the contact group on the CRIC which met in the afternoon, continued into the evening.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

COP 8 President Cristina Narbona called the High-Level Segment to order. Grégoire de Kalbermatten, UNCCD Secretariat Officer-in-Charge, delivered a statement from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which highlighted that the twin threats of climate change and desertification affect our ability to reach the MDGs by 2015, and looked forward to the role that the ten-year strategic plan would play in the fight against desertification.

UNCCD Executive Secretary-designate Luc Gnacadja welcomed the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan, which provides coherence and a common understanding for the UNCCD's implementation. Outlining his vision to manage a successful business, he "pledged," in consultation with all relevant actors, to restructure the Secretariat to enable it to implement the strategy, effect all the recommendations in the JIU report as well as results-based and accountable budgeting, draw in private sector actors, and regularly communicate with the public.

Eighty-five speakers then addressed the High-Level Segment, including 17 Ministers and 9 Vice-Ministers. Many speakers discussed their UNCCD-related national activities, including BAHRAIN, CAPE VERDE, CROATIA, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, KYRGYZSTAN, MOROCCO, NEPAL, UGANDA, VIETNAM and YEMEN, as well as the ARAB MAGHREB UNION. Several speakers, including SUDAN and PALESTINE, highlighted the links between natural resources and conflict. GUATEMALA described regional efforts it is leading. NAMIBIA described national efforts aimed at adaptation to climate change, with a focus on changes in farming systems. SOUTH AFRICA outlined its activities, including implementation of a Biodiversity Monitoring Network and alien plant management and veld fire management strategies.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA called for COP guidance in elaborating synergies among the Rio Conventions. ROMANIA said the UNFCCC and CBD could benefit from synergies with UNCCD, and not simply vice versa. The GAMBIA said failure

to accept the links between the Rio Conventions will show a lack of seriousness and commitment to the UNCCD. BOLIVIA emphasized the links between water and land. ALBANIA reported that it has elaborated a strategic document on synergies among the three Rio Conventions.

BARBADOS stressed the climate change-desertification nexus and, to this end, called for a formal interagency link and establishment of a programme of cooperation, and work with countries to understand their key vulnerabilities. Noting that COP 8 is a turning point for the UNCCD, HAITI reiterated the importance of the synergies of the three Rio Conventions, and Portugal, for the EU, stressed adding water scarcity and management to these inter-linkages.

In addition to stating that convention synergy should "go beyond words," BURKINA FASO said the UNCCD is a tool for achieving the MDGs, but is hindered by resource constraints. Emphasizing the UNCCD's potential as an instrument to address poverty, GERMANY said the Convention is about people, not institutions. SOLOMON ISLANDS called for people-centred solutions to land degradation. VENEZUELA, highlighting its resource contribution to UNCCD implementation, stressed ODA that does not increase dependency and poverty. IRAN said synergy must begin at the national level.

The UNFCCC described its recent study on investment and financial flows, which indicates that present funding for adaptation is insufficient for meeting future adaptation needs, and said the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of the Rio Conventions has identified adaptation and addressing deforestation as priority areas of work. The CBD highlighted that the JLG meeting on Wednesday had adopted four concrete measures to enhance synergies between the Conventions. The WMO elaborated on the establishment, in cooperation with the UNCCD, of the Drought Management Centre for South-Eastern Europe.

Pakistan, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, recalled that Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation identify the UNFCCC as the key instrument for addressing climate change, and called for strengthening funding mechanisms for adaptation activities, including through the GEF and other related funds. ARMENIA highlighted the roles of funding sources, such as the Adaptation Fund and the CDM, in addressing desertification and climate change. GABON said its forests absorb carbon equivalent to the amount emitted by the five biggest European powers, and polluting countries should pay for the problem.

Presenting the African Common Position, GHANA urged parties to pay their obligations, support and institutionalize RCUs, and strengthen GM-Secretariat coordination.

On the ten-year strategic plan, speakers suggested that it: needs concrete goals, preferably quantitative (MEXICO); should emphasize enhanced capacity at the local level to adapt to climate change and increase support to developing countries to combat desertification (CHINA); will enable the adoption of better regional and global integrated strategies (HONDURAS); should reflect the needs of countries in South and East Europe (MOLDOVA); should be accompanied by an implementation framework (CHAD); and needs a substantial budget to be effective (GUINEA). SWAZILAND said all parties should implement it within their differentiated capacities.

The EU noted that approving the ten-year strategic plan and an adequate budget, coupled with solid collaborative work between the Secretariat and GM, provides the requisite conditions for UNCCD implementation. CÔTE D'IVOIRE said the plan should be adopted and required reforms implemented.

On the GM, speakers said it should: be located in IFAD (GUATEMALA); cooperate more closely with the Secretariat, and continue work under its new reforms (BENIN); be strengthened in its structure (BRAZIL); and engage in increased capacity building (MALI). IFAD emphasized its strong commitment to the GM. The GM said: it looks forward to "delivering as one" with the Secretariat based on their different mandates and functions; the GM's cooperation with IFAD is growing stronger; and the COP has already given strong guidance to the GM and Secretariat on how to move forward. NIGERIA said the GM should not be made an alternative secretariat or engage in functions that compete with the Secretariat. Stating its commitment to the Rio Principles and Paris Declaration, NORWAY stressed the prioritization of sustainable land management to qualify for UNCCD financing.

The UAE supported strengthening the RCUs, MAURITANIA expressed commitment to them, and SENEGAL supported making them institutions of the Secretariat.

ARGENTINA emphasized the role that scientific organs, such as the IPCC and CST, have in identifying methods and solutions for combating desertification. NIGER said the CST should do more to ensure scientific knowledge is available to populations. FRANCE said the UNCCD should be the center of knowledge and expertise on desertification. KENYA said the Convention should focus on tools, models and methods that can be upscaled by parties. ICELAND supported the establishment of an independent panel of experts for the UNCCD, and reported the outcomes of the recently concluded forum on soils held in his country. ISRAEL described the newly established Global Network on Dryland Research Institutes (GNDRI) that can support the CST's work.

LYBIA, SYRIA, ALGERIA, and SAUDI ARABIA, among others, supported the proposal for a 2010-2020 decade for combating desertification. QATAR said it would like to host the next COP. ZIMBABWE welcomed the contributions and deliberations emanating from this conference on the preparations for CSD 16 and 17.

DJIBOUTI supported reforms within the GEF that improve equitability between the Rio Conventions. TANZANIA highlighted to the GEF the need for capacity building for programme development. JORDAN reiterated the importance of the GEF as the UNCCD's main financing mechanism, urged for the revitalization of the GM, and called for assistance beyond Africa.

ZAMBIA called on developed country parties to adopt equitable trade incentives that would enable Zambia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to increase their participation in global trade, such as incentives for organic farming products and forest produce.

OPTEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

Co-chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) and Jozef Buys (Belgium), the contact group met throughout the day. Various options on the budget were tabled by delegations, including: adoption of the budget proposal of the Secretariat; 10% increase in euros; 5% increase in US dollars; and zero nominal growth in US dollars. Anaedu explained that a 5% increase in US dollar terms would mean a 10% decrease in euro terms.

Following one delegation's suggestion, the group identified the key messages that should be conveyed in the decision on programme and budget, including: aligning the budget with the strategic plan; seeking efficiency in the use of resources and the operations of the Secretariat and GM; seeking judicious use of Supplementary Fund resources; taking into account all COP decisions; and clarity of financial reporting based on results-based management.

The group then proceeded to the second reading of Draft Decision 23/COP 8 (programme and budget). Delegations reached agreement, *inter alia*, on paragraphs: welcoming the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan; taking note of the Secretary-General's appointment of the Executive Secretary at the Assistant Secretary-General level; and noting that the operations of the Secretariat and GM must be managed on the basis of the amount of the approved biennium core budget. Delegations will resume negotiations on bracketed text on Friday.

OPEN-ENDED CONTACT GROUP – CRIC

The contact group chaired by Bongani Masuku (Swaziland) met in the afternoon. Delegates were informed that, for legal reasons, it is not possible to harmonize reporting under the three Rio Conventions, so they altered language in CRIC draft decision 6 on this subject, to request the Secretariat, with the other secretariats of the JLG, to advise on ways to make reporting more efficient.

On COW draft decision L.15, parties agreed to renew the mandate of the CRIC as a subsidiary body of the COP. They agreed that it should function under its present terms of reference "where applicable" and that these terms should be "revised as necessary" at COP 9, bearing in mind the ten-year strategic plan, relevant COP 8 decisions, and outcomes from CRIC 7 and 8.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The "Friends of the Chair Group" on the ten-year strategic plan met all day and was expected to work late into the night Thursday, following a 2:00 am "breakthrough" Thursday. It was reported that parties may have agreed to: have the JIU conduct an assessment of the GM along with the Terms of Reference for the assessment; and continue supporting the RCUs, pending the elaboration of regional proposals on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination and a Secretariat-led review of current initiatives for consideration at COP 9. Overall progress was reported to be slow, and by Thursday evening delegates had only addressed the provisions on the Secretariat, GM, and performance monitoring. Some suggested that a "catch-22" situation may be unfolding, as the budget group awaits progress on the strategic plan and vice versa.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COP 8 will be available on Monday, 17 September 2007, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/desert/cop8/>