

## UNCCD COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2009

Delegates to UNCCD COP 9 concluded their discussion of the agenda and programme of work, and election of officers, during a morning plenary, and then convened in the Committee of the Whole (COW) and Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

### PLENARY

COP President Homero Bibiloni opened the meeting and delegates approved the agenda. He summarized discussions held in the Bureau on the high-level segment and participation by civil society. Delegates then elected the Vice-Presidents: Stephen Muwaya (Uganda), Sandjima Dounia (Chad), Xianliang Yi (China), Naser Moghaddasi (Iran), Yuriy Kolmaz (Ukraine), Giergi Kolbin (Georgia), Alejandro Jacques (Mexico), Christine Dawson (US) and Franz Breitweiser (Austria). Delegates elected Klaus Kellner (South Africa) as CST Chair and Ismail Abdel Galil Hussein (Egypt) as COW Chair. Delegates noted that Israel Torres (Panama) had been elected to chair CRIC 7 and 8.

Delegates approved the accreditation of NGOs, IGOs and observers (ICCD/COP(9)/16).

Delegates discussed when the new CST Chair would commence his work. The ASIA GROUP, AFRICA GROUP and EU, opposed by the LAC GROUP, suggested that the Chair assume his duties on Friday, 25 September. The LAC GROUP said the Rules of Procedure should be observed, while SYRIA cautioned that Africa would have four Bureau seats. The President said, due to lack of consensus, the new CST Chair should take office immediately, and suggested that there be a wide collaboration between the outgoing and incoming chairs.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**PROGRAMME AND BUDGET:** The Secretariat presented the Secretariat's programme and budget (ICCD/COP(9)/5 and Add.1) and the GM presented the programme and budget for the GM for the biennium 2010-2011 (ICCD/COP(9)/5/Add.2).

The EU stressed the need to know which financial resources come from the core, supplementary, and other extrabudgetary sources. JAPAN and the US expressed concern regarding the budget increase given the current financial climate. The US said the budget allocates resources for activities beyond the Convention and Strategy's mandates. The LAC GROUP said not all countries in his regional annex agreed with the previous day's G-77/China support for the budget.

The LAC GROUP lamented that the Secretariat distributed an informal document only prior to the current session, although his region had raised questions pertaining to the budget at their regional meeting.

**ASSESSMENT OF THE GM BY THE JIU:** Even Fontaine Ortiz, JIU Chairman, presented the JIU report on the assessment of the GM (JIU/Rep 2009/4). He explained that a comprehensive evaluation of the GM's performance necessitated an examination of the Convention's global architecture. He said the GM's general performance was good and therefore inspectors focused on the GM-Secretariat relationship. The JIU concluded, *inter alia*, that there is: a poor Joint Programme of Work; poor coordination and unclear mandates; and insufficient promotion of synergies between the two institutions and with other UN agencies.

The LAC GROUP, the AFRICA GROUP and others expressed concern at the report's late dissemination and the lack of timely translations. UGANDA asked to what extent the JIU had followed its original TOR.

The LAC GROUP said the GM should improve efficiency, transparency and accountability to the COP, and the COP should provide clear guidance in this regard.

BENIN and SENEGAL questioned the elimination of scenario 3, in which the GM becomes a fund, with MOROCCO noting that the UNFCCC established several funds.

SWITZERLAND, SOUTH AFRICA and the GAMBIA stressed the importance of a decision to address GM-Secretariat coordination.

In the afternoon session, Christian Mersmann, GM, said the GM supports the JIU's five recommendations. He added that scenario 1, which sees an improved status quo, echoes those recommendations. He said with scenario 2, the Convention will have to be reopened.

NORWAY and JAPAN asked the legal implications of merging the GM and Secretariat. CSOs urged that institutional reforms not overlook civil society participation. GUATEMALA inquired how many times the Secretariat and the GM had met over the last year.

A contact group was discussed. BRAZIL and ARGENTINA said TORs should be established. PANAMA and COSTA RICA said an *Ad Hoc* working group should be established and a decision on institutional arrangements made at a future COP. Later in the afternoon, the COW Chair read a proposed mandate for the contact group. ALGERIA requested the mandate text in writing and proposed amending it. Participants addressed at length whether to review the mandate of the contact group in the COW or in the contact group itself. The LAC GROUP, with support from the US, EU, many African parties and others

asked to propose an amendment. Some parties said they could not discuss the amendment without translation. Parties agreed to review the mandate and the amendment in informal regional consultations on 23 September, following which the contact group would meet and adopt its mandate.

**REGIONAL COORDINATION:** The Secretariat introduced the document on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention (ICCD/COP(9)/3). The EU, SWITZERLAND and NORWAY supported making use of existing regional coordination mechanisms of other UN agencies, and avoiding creating overlapping structures. The LAC GROUP and SAUDI ARABIA emphasized the importance of regional mechanisms. PAKISTAN supported establishing regional mechanisms with their necessary budget, while JAPAN encouraged maximizing the utility of existing institutions to maintain budgetary levels. NORWAY, SWITZERLAND and the LAC GROUP opposed decentralizing the functions of the Secretariat from Bonn to the regions.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF CRIC:** The COW Chair announced that the agenda item on the CRIC TOR scheduled for this session would be addressed at the first meeting of the CRIC. The EU stressed that the COW, not the CRIC, should establish the TOR. Executive Secretary Gnacadja clarified that the CRIC will review its TORs and send its suggestions to the COW for its consideration.

**ALIGNMENT OF ACTION PROGRAMMES WITH THE STRATEGY:** The Secretariat presented document ICCD/COP(9)/2 and Add.1 on the alignment of action programmes with the Strategy. The EU said his group wishes to see how the guidelines would be implemented. MOROCCO, GUATEMALA and COSTA RICA commented that it is difficult for the guidelines to be applied by regions and countries with different conditions.

#### **COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

CST Chair Kellner opened CST 9, and said the CST should take into account emerging issues. He proposed permitting CST 8 Chair William Dar to serve as Chair until Friday, 25 September. BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA and CHILE cautioned that would be against the Rules of Procedure. MALI, MOROCCO, SOUTH AFRICA, BURKINA FASO and BELARUS supported having the CST 8 and 9 Chairs co-chair the session. CST 9 Chair Kellner said he would chair the meeting in collaboration with CST 8 Chair Dar.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** CST 9 elected Mihajlo Markovic (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Warapon Waramit (Thailand), Cesar Altamirano (Bolivia), and Lawrence Townley-Smith (Canada) as Vice-Chairs for the CST 9 Bureau.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK:** On the provisional agenda (ICCD/COP(9)/CST/1), JAMAICA, supported by BRAZIL and opposed by the EU, proposed reducing the duration of the first Scientific Conference to one and one-half days. The Secretary suggested bringing this issue to the CST Bureau's attention. CHILE said the first Scientific Conference should be part of the CST and not a parallel process. Delegates adopted the provisional agenda and organization of work, and a contact group to draft conclusions was established.

**DRAFT WORK PLAN AND PROGRAMME:** The Secretariat presented the draft four-year work plan and costed draft two-year work programme for the CST (ICCD/COP(9)/CST/3 and ICCD/COP(9)/5/Add.3). The EU highlighted the need to monitor the results of the Scientific Conference and ensure they are communicated after the event. He said the timing and modality of future Scientific Conferences should be discussed. He said the work plan should have a road map for continued work on indicators, and the performance indicators should be quantified as much as possible.

**RESHAPING THE OPERATION OF THE CST:** Delegates discussed whether country name plates were necessary during the Scientific Conference, with ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, CHINA, JAMAICA and PAKISTAN noting the political nature of the Conference. The HOLY SEE said "science should speak freely," and MOROCCO agreed.

#### **SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE**

CST 9 Chair Kellner opened the first UNCCD Scientific Conference, which he said is pioneering a new approach. Scientific Conference Chair Dar recalled that the UNCCD recognizes the importance of science to understand land degradation and to find solutions to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience in developing countries. Mark Winslow, DSD Coordinator, outlined the consultative process leading to the organization of the first Scientific Conference. Elysabeth David, on behalf of Executive Secretary Gnacadja, highlighted the need to show the world why land matters, and said that it is only with this information that we can attract attention and finances.

**KEYNOTE ADDRESSES:** Mahmoud Solh (DSD Chair and Director General, ICARDA) spoke on the role of science and technology in combating DLDD in the dry areas. During the discussion, NIGER highlighted the importance of national research programmes. BOLIVIA, CHILE and INDIA called attention to traditional knowledge. CHILE said desertification causes other than poverty should be considered. MOROCCO emphasized research for techniques and approaches. ARGENTINA said conservation agriculture requires inputs that small farmers may not be able to finance.

Elena Abraham, Director, Instituto Argentino de Investigaciones de las Zonas Áridas (IADIZA) presented on "Desertification assessment and monitoring in Argentina." Participants asked questions on: how these case study experiences could be extrapolated (NAMIBIA); the proportion of rehabilitated lands (NIGER); how farmers and policy makers can use the monitoring and assessment methodology (CUBA); the natural and human causes of land degradation and desertification (YEMEN); what proportion of land degradation can be ascribed to bad management or bad policies (ZIMBABWE); clarification on indicators used (GUINEA), and on socio-economic aspects (MEXICO).

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY GLOBAL INITIATIVES:**

Delegates were informed about four global initiatives. Mariam Akhtar-Schuster announced that European DesertNet would become DesertNet International. Michael Mortimore introduced the IUCN Dryland Opportunities Paradigm. Uriel Safriel said the Global Network of Dryland Research Institutes would be launched on 24 September. Tristan Tyrrell discussed the 2010-Biodiversity Indicators Partnership.

#### **IN THE CORRIDORS**

Many delegates left the second day of the COP frustrated that discussion had been dominated by procedural issues that remained unresolved. Some expressed concern that a lack of leadership might be to blame, which they anticipated would continue to hinder substantive discussions in the coming days. Regarding the strong tone of the JIU's presentation on the GM-Secretariat relationship, many highlighted that the GM's management was not put in question. One delegate summarized the views of many when he said working with the GM and Secretariat "is like dealing with divorced parents," and highlighted the importance of an amicable solution with clear delineation of responsibilities.

Meanwhile, the full room for the Scientific Conference drew many positive reactions, with many noting the growing engagement of scientists from a variety of fields, as evidenced in the announcements of new scientific networks.