

## UNCCD COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2009

On the third day of UNCCD COP 9, delegates convened in the CRIC and the first Scientific Conference. By the end of the day, contact groups on the JIU assessment of the GM, the CRIC and the CST had commenced consideration of issues on their respective bodies' agendas.

### CRIC

CRIC Chair Israel Torres opened CRIC 8, noting a proposed amendment to include an item on the CRIC's TOR in the agenda (ICCD/CRIC(8)/1). The EU said it is against UN rules for a body to adopt its own TOR. A contact group was established and the agenda was adopted without amendment.

**REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY:** The Secretariat introduced the Report of the CRIC on its seventh session (ICCD/CRIC(7)/5). The LAC Group said the CRIC should be a permanent subsidiary body within the Convention.

**WORKPLANS OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE CONVENTION:** Executive Secretary Gnacadja introduced the workplans of the institutions and subsidiary bodies of the Convention (ICCD/CRIC(8)/2 and Add.1 to Add.4). Several parties noted their general satisfaction with the workplans. The EU said some indicators should be strengthened, but that budgetary implications must be considered. JAPAN urged prioritizing indicators and targets.

MOROCCO cautioned against use of indicators that are difficult to define. MEXICO said the work plans and programmes should account for regional as well as global approaches. SAUDI ARABIA stressed the need for linkages across the different institutions' plans, as well as between the programmes and budgets.

**Multi-Year Workplan for the GM (2010-2013):** GM Managing Director Merzmann presented the four-year workplan for the GM (ICCD/CRIC(8)/2/Add.3).

ARGENTINA highlighted the need to continue working with regions and subregions, with GUATEMALA calling for a more regionally balanced distribution of funds. IRAN and SAUDI ARABIA emphasized the need to support regional coordination mechanisms. The EU and ARGENTINA commended the GM for its positive interaction with the GEF. CHINA noted the need to define indicators to measure if objectives are being met. BRAZIL said there is a clear improvement in transparency and accountability but asked for more details regarding the costed work programme.

**Multi-Year Workplan for the CST:** CST 9 Chair Kellner presented the draft multi-year workplan for the CST (2010-2013) (ICCD/COP(9)/CST/3).

**REPORT OF THE GEF:** In the morning, the Secretariat reported on the collaboration between the UNCCD and the GEF (ICCD/CRIC(8)/3 and Add.1). In the afternoon, Mohamed Bakarr, GEF, presented the report on GEF support of the land degradation focal area (ICCD/CRIC(8)/3/Add.1). He highlighted that GEF-4 had made US\$300 million available for SLM projects with a focus on Africa.

CUBA highlighted the need to give clear guidance to the GEF on providing similar levels of support to land degradation and other focal areas, while AUSTRALIA said such guidance should respect the GEF's processes. The LAC GROUP said a request should be presented for the GEF-5 to support all countries' implementation of the Strategy. The EU welcomed the alignment of the GEF's strategic programme on land degradation with the UNCCD Strategy. CHAD said a new project to support all countries in preparing national reports will soon be announced. GUATEMALA said a more balanced regional representation was needed, as LAC is suffering severe impacts of desertification and land degradation. The US and JAPAN highlighted links with adaptation, and with NAMIBIA congratulated the shorter project cycle. CHINA requested support for the development of indicators on UNCCD implementation.

The GM highlighted their capacity to work with the GEF to leverage co-financing for the implementation of GEF projects in the land degradation focal area. ARGENTINA noted the opportunity to tap into adaptation funds for SLM projects.

Bakarr responded to comments, saying the GEF-5 replenishment is still under discussion, so the amount of resources and conditions attached are under negotiation. The Secretariat urged parties to consider the momentum created by the G8 Summit's support of the UNCCD to request additional funding for SLM both as part of adaptation strategies and to achieve the MDGs.

**REPORTING GUIDELINES AND INDICATORS:** The Secretariat introduced the documents on the draft reporting guidelines and performance indicators (ICCD/CRIC(8)/5 and Add.1 to Add.3) and suggested that parties consider adopting the Glossary of performance indicators for the review of implementation of the Strategy.

CUBA said parties should select the indicators that are most appropriate to them. CHINA and AUSTRALIA suggested a trial period before the indicators are formally adopted. COLOMBIA, BENIN and GUINEA requested assistance to apply the indicators. The EU highlighted the need: for a monitoring system for the implementation of the Convention and Strategy;

to reinforce cooperation with other processes, including climate change and biodiversity; and for CSO participation. GUINEA and CHINA highlighted the need to simplify the indicators and to set achievable objectives.

The GM introduced a document outlining proposed formats and intended content of a standard financial annex and a programme and project sheet (ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.4), and the Secretariat introduced a document on a common framework for the definition and selection of best practices (ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.5). CUBA, SAUDI ARABIA and COSTA RICA stressed the role of the CST in defining and selecting best practices. CANADA urged linking with existing databases that compile published and unpublished best practices. IRAN highlighted the role of regional coordination mechanisms and existing thematic networks, and ZIMBABWE of centres of excellence, in identifying subregional and regional best practices.

**ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION:** The Secretariat introduced a document on the Performance review and assessment of the implementation of the Convention and of the Strategy (2008-2018) (ICCD/CRIC(8)/4), highlighting a methodology for performance review and assessment of implementation systems (PRAIS). The EU welcomed PRAIS and said new reporting requirements on best practices and lessons learned should be tested prior to being required, with ARGENTINA adding that adequate resources should be provided to use this methodology. With the support of NORWAY, the EU emphasized the need to give CSOs more space at intersessional CRIC sessions.

### SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

Executive Secretary Gnacadja greeted participants and highlighted the need for a focused scientific research programme on desertification to bring attention to the UNCCD.

Charles Hutchinson, Chair of Working Group I (WGI), presented an overview of the Group's activities on monitoring and assessing land rehabilitation SLM efforts. Youba Sokona, Sahara and Sahel Observatory, presented on "Highlights of policy-relevant aspects." Participants discussed, *inter alia*, the level of rehabilitation of degraded land in all continents, the need for national environmental monitoring systems, the cost of high-resolution data for local monitoring, the definition of desertification, training of human resources, the need for synergies with other conventions, and the difference in technologies available between countries with large proportions of private versus public property.

James Reynolds, Duke University, presented on "Integrated science-based framework for monitoring and assessing desertification/land degradation processes and drivers." He said integrated assessment is like a toolbox from which a broad spectrum of approaches can be drawn to accomplish an integration of the complex issues involved in land degradation and desertification. Participants inquired about: the definition of desertification; which indicators are most important and how they will be identified by the CST; and whether there is a scientific approach to evaluate ecosystem services.

Hutchinson then presented the recommendations of WGI, focusing on: the establishment of a Global Dryland Observing System (GDOS) and related activities; the integration of human and bio-physical variables; the establishment of an independent body to oversee M&A activities, and a cost-benefit analysis framework to better inform policy makers of the benefits of actions and the costs of inaction. Participants remarked on the need to avoid increasing reporting burdens for countries and the poor access to scientific information in developing countries. They sought clarification on the proposed establishment of a new scientific body.

Moderator Ephraim Nkonya, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), opened the session on understanding desertification and land degradation trends. Pedro Machado, EMBRAPA, Brazil, discussed land use and land management change framework for SLM, scientific methods for M&A of SLM and factors of SLM. Michaela Buenemann, New Mexico State University, explained the role of Geographic Information Science and Technology for M&A of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), and integrating different data sets. Johannes Lehmann, Cornell University, talked about indirect methods for M&A of SLM, and stressed the importance of coordination among the three Rio conventions. Participants discussed: the unpredictability of drought; agroforestry as an option for SLM; the importance of traditional knowledge and practices, and of the human dimension in SLM; the importance of public support to SLM; the need for SLM practices to be adoptable and replicable by farmers; and the issue of incentives, other than subsidies, for farmers to adopt SLM.

Hanspeter Liniger, WOCAT, presented on "Key concepts and issues in sustainable land management monitoring and assessment." He highlighted the importance of: building on the existing wealth of knowledge; recognizing that the issues involve complexities but also have basic principles; understanding locally adapted solutions; and using M&A for spreading SLM. Participants inquired about zero tillage, how to link SLM with integrated water resources management, and using land use planning as the basis for SLM.

Bertus Kruger, Namibian Agricultural Union, chaired a discussion of WGII's recommendations. Participants commented on: the need for recommendations that will assist countries; the importance of monitoring and assessment by farmers and land users themselves; the complementarity of *in situ* and *ex situ* approaches; the difficulty of using indicators to measure changes in the short term; the WG's definition of desertification and SLM; the need for financial resources to obtain M&A tools; and the emphasis on climate change mitigation over adaptation.

### CONTACT GROUP – JIU ASSESSMENT OF THE GM

This contact group, chaired by Maria Mbengashe (South Africa), held its first meeting during lunch. Participants agreed to consider the structure and functioning of the GM, with a view to submitting a draft decision for the COW's consideration. On proceeding with their work, they agreed to address the JIU's five recommendations, issues of concern additional to the recommendations and the JIU's scenarios. Participants also posed questions to JIU Chairman Even Fontaine Ortiz.

### CONTACT GROUP – CRIC

The contact group facilitated by Markku Aho (Finland) agreed on its mandate, including consideration of the workplans of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies, GEF issues, reporting issues, and PRAIS, with a view to submitting four draft decisions for consideration by the CRIC.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

Many parties were pleasantly surprised that the CRIC finished the day's agenda items ahead of schedule on Wednesday, although some cautioned that the CRIC only addressed non-contentious issues, while all decisions were deferred to contact groups. Several participants to the contact group on the JIU assessment of the GM were also cautiously optimistic. They felt the first meeting had established a constructive way to proceed and that some concrete recommendations could emerge. Some participants noted, however, that disentangling the "constructive ambiguity" that led to the GM's creation will not be easy.