

UNCCD COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2009

The two-day UNCCD COP 9 high-level segment concluded on Tuesday, 29 September, with roundtable discussions on “Desertification/land degradation and climate change – what role for the land in the ongoing negotiations for a new climate change regime at Copenhagen?” and “Partnerships and institutions for combating desertification, land degradation and drought – the path to improvement.” Delegates also met in contact groups throughout the day to develop draft decisions related to the CST, CRIC TOR, CRIC, the JIU assessment of the GM, budget and regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs).

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

ROUNDTABLE ON DESERTIFICATION/LAND DEGRADATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE: Roundtable Co-Chair Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Namibia, emphasized: creating an appropriate link to the new climate change regime; rehabilitating degraded land to prevent greenhouse gas emissions while also improving food security; and developing a UNCCD water policy framework.

Roundtable Moderator Jan McAlpine, Director, UNFF Secretariat, invited participants to engage in an interactive discussion. Zafar Adeel, Director of UN University – International Network on Water, Environment and Health, said the UNCCD’s scope should go beyond drylands to address land degradation and its links with development to meet current global challenges and to remain relevant within the UN system.

ITALY highlighted soil-related mitigation options and the production of biofuels as an economic opportunity for drylands. INDONESIA said effective synergies can be achieved if linked to land use, land-use change and forests. SOUTH AFRICA emphasized innovative mechanisms of payment for ecosystem services to enhance SLM practices.

URUGUAY conveyed a message by MERCOSUR and associated countries’ environment ministers, and said ministers offered to host and finance the regional coordination mechanism within MERCOSUR. John Kaputin, Secretary General, African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, highlighted the importance of SLM and said all countries should make their appropriate contribution to keep world temperatures from rising more than two degrees celsius above pre-industrial levels.

MEXICO discussed the Green Fund that his country has proposed in the climate change talks. BURKINA FASO said synergies among the Rio Conventions should be identified to facilitate access to relevant funding. The EU suggested looking

at the possibilities to use existing mechanisms for cooperation and support, and said there must be a strong agreement in December on climate change. FRANCE called attention to the role of agricultural techniques in countering land degradation.

IPADE, Spain, highlighted the importance of early warning systems and incorporating input from local communities into national action plans, and warned that biofuel production threatens biodiversity and food security. Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement emphasized the need for “land degradation and desertification justice.”

The UNFCCC highlighted that the UN “Delivering as One” for climate change approach works towards achieving synergies with the UNCCD objectives, noting that mitigation actions, if carefully designed, can also enhance resilience and adaptive capacity. She also said REDD could provide an opportunity for significant mitigation actions by developing countries. BRAZIL said “we are a COP of the poor” and highlighted the opportunity to include soil carbon sequestration in the CDM and to negotiate a specific climate change fund with sufficient funding for adaptation.

ROUNDTABLE ON PARTNERSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONS FOR COMBATING DESERTIFICATION: Co-Chair Asa-Britt Karlsson, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment of Sweden called for a strong UNCCD focus on implementation and integration with other conventions to give substance to the “One UN” concept. Monique Barbut, Chief Executive Officer of the GEF, said combating DLDD must be done in the context of sustainable development and that under GEF-5 there will be an increase in resources to combat land degradation. Moderator Carla Del Ponte, Ambassador of Switzerland to Argentina, stressed that GEF resources should strengthen decentralized entities. TUVVALU urged international and regional agencies to work together to address threats of climate change in Pacific countries. The EU noted that projects could succeed only by involving all stakeholders.

LESOTHO highlighted the importance of synergy among Rio Conventions and linkages between DLDD and climate change mitigation and adaptation. SWAZILAND invited developed country partners to support his country’s implementation of a water development strategy, and requested the GEF to treat the UNCCD like the other Rio Conventions. CSOs highlighted: assistance to CSOs; action plans at the regional and local levels; joint workshops of CSOs and research institutions; and development of renewable energy. A CSO (France) said investment in drylands is linked to equality and justice, and that costs of inaction are comparable to the GNP of some countries.

KENYA stressed that partnerships need to be strategic and linked to national policies to combat DLDD. NEPAL said DLDD and soil carbon sequestration are linked. TANZANIA said partnership in financing is key and called for increased support to SLM in GEF 5 and partnerships with private and business sectors. The REPUBLIC of KOREA underlined the importance of regional coordination and support for cooperative activities in Northeast Asia.

SIERRA LEONE and NIGER urged GEF 5 to increase funding to the land degradation focal area, and SIERRA LEONE supported a GM-Secretariat merger. ZIMBABWE appealed to prioritize the UNCCD work programme. Turkmenistan, on behalf of five Central Asian countries, described a programme in the region with GEF funding and a project supported by the GM. TIMOR LESTE highlighted the need for financial support and capacity building.

ALBANIA described national activities to better manage land. ISRAEL stressed the importance of deliberations regarding an independent science panel to serve the Convention and said carbon sequestration is impossible without biodiversity. SWITZERLAND highlighted that combating land degradation is an investment in human and food security. VIET NAM emphasized the need for integrated programmes to combat desertification and address climate change at all levels. ARGENTINA said any scientific panel linked to the Convention must be intergovernmental to give technical knowledge political shape.

CILSS stressed the need for coordination between regional offices and international agencies, and joint work programmes. PALESTINE said political will and resources are needed to address the problems. NORWAY said technology to monitor soil carbon must be further developed and stressed the value of CSO involvement in the UNCCD. BURUNDI recalled his country's effort in ecosystem restoration and in soil and water conservation of the upper Nile basin. TURKEY recalled national afforestation and erosion control programmes. PANAMA called for more attention to adaptation and better use of the Adaptation Fund. SAUDI ARABIA recalled his country's support to developing countries and international agencies to combat DLDD. FRANCE said DLDD has its place in the IPCC and in the future Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). SYRIA stressed the importance of soil sequestration.

CONTACT GROUPS

CRIC TOR: This contact group met in the morning to review the draft TOR of the CRIC. The group discussed the mandate and functions of the CRIC and agreed, *inter alia*, to undertake performance reviews based on a costed work programme, compile best practices on implementation of the Convention, and invite CSOs to prepare reports on their work for the implementation of the Convention. Delegates debated keeping some COP 5 decision elements regarding the consideration of financial flows, with one delegation contending that these elements would interfere with the RBM approach, and agreed to insert a reference in the preamble.

CRIC: This contact group addressed a draft decision on the CST, CRIC, GM and Secretariat workplans, and discussed, *inter alia*, whether further workplans would be presented during intersessional meetings or during the COP, and whether the group had enough information from the CST and CRIC TOR contact groups to adopt a decision related to these bodies. Delegates deleted a reference indicating the Secretariat would strengthen its resource mobilization functions for carrying out its activities "in partnership with the GM."

RCMs: This contact group considered four options for RCMs, as well as their core tasks. One speaker emphasized parity in distribution of personnel among regions. Some parties highlighted that RCMs should not engage in the Convention's implementation, as that is the responsibility of parties. Another participant said the regional documents identified a relatively similar set of tasks for RCMs, but costs estimations varied widely. He cautioned that options presented as "budget neutral" take for granted a 15-19% budget increase which is unlikely to be adopted. Participants also discussed existing arrangements on RCUs and the impacts of the RCM options in terms of relocating personnel and office space.

JIU ASSESSMENT OF THE GM: The contact group continued to revise operative text. Participants agreed to request the GM to prepare and submit for discussion at intersessional CRICs a compilation of data and information on financial resources mobilized and technology transferred. The text details information, disaggregated at country and regional levels, to be included in the compilation.

On a paragraph requesting the GM to develop criteria and guidelines for allocation of financial resources mobilized, taking into account the balance among and within regional annexes, participants debated whether the paragraph refers to core, voluntary or extrabudgetary resources. Discussing the development of a fundraising strategy, some parties said the Secretariat and GM should create separate strategies to avoid blurring their respective mandates, while others said the two institutions should create a single strategy to avoid duplication. Views diverged regarding the scope of such a strategy.

BUDGET: A paragraph with reference to preparing work programmes including budget scenarios under zero growth was deleted Monday evening. Tuesday morning, the group discussed the costed two-year work programme for the Secretariat (2010-2011). Delegates discussed the proposed 39% increase in the core budget for advocacy, with some saying it was too high and others stating the sub-programme is vital. Some said several budgeted activities are the responsibility of the GM. Delegates differed on their preferred percentage increase of the budget, varying from 0-21%. Some highlighted the importance of regional coordination, while others said the Secretariat should focus on core mandated functions, not implementation. The group continued to discuss the costed two-year work programme for the Secretariat in the evening, with some noting mistakes in figures and requesting corrections. Delegates then took up the draft budget decision.

CST: This contact group continued its discussion of the CST workplan during an afternoon meeting.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Tuesday's full agenda gave the appearance that participants to COP 9 were fully engaged in preparing draft decisions to present to the COP, as three contact groups met in parallel throughout the day. However, some participants reported progress was slow as issues negotiated in the different groups are interlinked. For example, the budget group awaited input from the other contact groups on what resources might be needed, while participants in the RCM group said options will depend on the budget that is approved. In the meantime, the contact group on the JIU assessment of the GM was waiting for the Secretariat to make available a response from the UNOLA on a GM-Secretariat merger received Tuesday afternoon. Some delegates also noted they were waiting for draft text from the Secretariat on CSO participation, among others. Many hoped that the waiting would soon end and that the contact groups would make swifter progress on Wednesday.