

UNCCD COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2009

Delegates to UNCCD COP 9 concluded the ninth session of the CST in the morning, during which they agreed on six draft decisions as well as advice for the CRIC and the COW. Delegates also met in the CRIC and the COW, and contact groups convened throughout the day to develop draft decisions related to the CRIC TOR, CRIC, the JIU assessment of the GM, budget and regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs).

COW

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS:

The Secretariat introduced the document on "Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies" (ICCD/COP(9)/10 and Add 1). The EU recommended making use of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and of the concept of ecosystem services.

FOLLOW UP ON WSSD AND CSD: The Secretariat introduced the document on "Follow-up on the World Summit on Sustainable Development and outcome of CSD 16 and 17 (ICCD/COP(9)/11)." Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General, UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs, said UNCCD parties would be able to benefit from the facilitative process to assist in mobilizing new resources for sustainable forest management that was informally agreed by the UNFF. The EU said they would like to see a clearer recommendation regarding follow-up. SYRIA called on the UN Secretary-General to give greater strength to the UNCCD. TOGO called on the international community to translate intentions into actions and give greater support to the UNCCD in spite of the economic crisis.

UN DECADE FOR DESERTS: The Secretariat introduced the document on "UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020)" (ICCD/COP(9)/15). ALGERIA, GHANA, SYRIA, MALI, NIGER and TANZANIA highlighted the need to adopt modalities for the implementation of the UN Resolution on the Decade, and requested that the Secretariat take measures to make it operational. BURKINA FASO emphasized the need to better communicate what is being done and the US called on parties to improve data sharing, including among researchers, meteorologists and land managers. VIET NAM highlighted awareness raising. Executive Secretary Gnacadja reported on activities in the work programme related to advocacy, calling for clear aims and a focus on results.

RULE 47 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE: The Secretariat introduced the agenda item on rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure (ICCD/COP(9)/12). Delegates agreed to defer this issue to COP 10.

ROSTER OF EXPERTS: The COW Chair said a decision will be presented on this topic as a result of work in the CST, noting the roster currently has 1800 experts.

REPORT OF PARLIAMENTARIANS: A report on the proceedings of a meeting of parliamentarians, held from 24-25 September on the side of COP 9, was presented, noting the importance of food security for human security and global coordinated solutions.

CST

CST delegates agreed to six draft decisions developed by the CST contact group.

Draft decision L.29/COP.9, on advice on how best to measure progress on Strategic Objectives 1, 2, and 3 of the Strategy, includes operative paragraphs and an annex that identifies indicators for reporting. Two indicators – the proportion of the population in affected areas living above the poverty line and land cover status – are the minimum required sub-set of impact indicators required for reporting by affected countries beginning in 2012, and the remaining impact indicators, while recommended, are optional.

Draft decision L.33/COP.9, on programme of work of CST 10, identifies two priorities for the CST agenda, the development and implementation of impact indicators and implementation of the knowledge management system, as well as other items.

Draft decision L.37/COP.9, on outcome of the UNCCD first Scientific Conference, takes note of the contributions of the Conference, requests the CST Bureau to consult with parties and regional groups to review its outcomes and requests the second special session of the CST (CST SS-2) to consider the review and make recommendations to COP 10, and encourages the scientific community involved with the Conference to publish its findings. NIGER clarified that the publications were not "scientifically accepted" papers, and the Chair noted that the draft did not refer to "scientific" findings.

Draft decision L.34/COP.9, on election of officers for CST, indicates that COP 10 will consider amending the Rules of Procedure (including Rule 22), with a view to ensure continuity in the CST's work.

Draft decision L.35/COP.9, on science and technology correspondents, requests the CST Bureau to consult with parties and regional groups to develop recommendations on the role and responsibilities of the correspondents for consideration at CST SS-2 and CST 10, and invites developed country parties, international organizations and relevant stakeholders to provide support for science and technology correspondents in all CST sessions.

Draft decision L.38/COP.9, on measures to enable the UNCCD to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought, requests the CST to assess how to organize international, interdisciplinary scientific advice, taking into account the need to ensure transparency and geographical balance, and describing how the assessment would take place. The HOLY SEE asked if the assessment would consider models from other Rio Conventions. BRAZIL said the intention was to seek the right model to engage science in the UNCCD process.

The CST then examined two documents regarding CST inputs to the CRIC and the COW, and the Chair explained that the CRIC would make recommendations to the COW. Chair Kellner thanked delegates for their hard work and declared CST 9 closed.

CRIC

CRIC Chair Torres invited CRIC delegates to consider the input from the CST on how to best measure progress on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the Strategy. CST Chair Kellner introduced the input, summarizing the CST's decision regarding the identification of indicators. The Secretariat introduced the agenda item on performance review and assessment of the implementation of the Convention and of the Strategy (ICCD/CRIC(8)/4).

The Chair introduced draft decision L.21/COP.9, on collaboration with the GEF. Belarus, for the CEE, suggested adding a reference to "land degradation" after a reference to "combat desertification," and proposed deleting "developing" in a reference to assistance for affected developing country parties. BRAZIL said the Convention's focus is to combat desertification especially in those countries most affected by desertification, and indicated that the draft already reflected a compromise. The Chair said the draft decision would be sent back to the contact group.

CONTACT GROUPS

CRIC TOR: Participants' views diverged on including provisions coming from COP 5 on review of the financial flows in the mandate and functions of the CRIC, but postponed decision on this. Paragraphs on the composition of the CRIC were agreed, as well as the inclusion of the GEF, and the GM pending a decision of the contact group, among the reporting entities for assessment of implementation.

On text related to intersessional CRICs, some parties stressed the importance of giving time to review implementation of the Convention, while others did not want to restrict what can be discussed at these sessions. They agreed that intersessional CRICs should focus on the review of implementation of the Convention by parties, and assess implementation against performance indicators every two years and impact indicators every four years.

CRIC: This contact group discussed a draft decision on the CST, CRIC, GM and Secretariat workplans, and considered inputs received from the CST. During their discussion of impact and performance indicators, they agreed to indicate they were "provisional."

RCMs: This contact group addressed the operative paragraphs of a decision on establishing an RCM, and discussed whether existing arrangements for RCUs would need to be revised, including the possibility of relocating the RCMs to more convenient venues. Most developing countries favored maintaining existing RCUs. Some delegates emphasized the need to avoid duplication of work when relocating posts, and to end existing RCU arrangements and sign new MoUs with host institutions and countries. Delegates agreed new RCMs would entail the relocation of one post from the Secretariat and one post from the GM in each of the regions, although they debated whether the relocation of personnel to the regions would leave a single post to coordinate all RCMs in Bonn. Participants also discussed whether the two posts called for by the CEE region should be posted in Bonn.

JIU ASSESSMENT OF THE GM: The contact group heard from the legal officer, who summarized the UNOLA's response to a request from the EU Presidency for a legal opinion concerning the recommendations of the JIU in its assessment report (ICCD/COP(9)/9/Add.2). She explained that the UNOLA provides legal opinions only when requested by "a competent organ of the UN," but that the UNOLA had appended relevant contents of a memorandum, dated 16 September 2009, responding to questions posed by the JIU.

Turning to their draft decision, participants discussed the contents of remaining paragraphs. They generally agreed on the need to change the reporting lines of the GM. Views diverged regarding broader changes to the GM-Secretariat relationship. Some parties envisioned the GM housed under the Secretariat, others under IFAD. Some favoured text that places the GM "under the supervision of the Executive Secretary." Others said this would require amending the Convention because performing supervisory functions exceeds the Secretariat's ability to perform "other secretariat functions," as established in Article 23 of the Convention. One party suggested requesting the Secretariat and GM to collaborate in reviewing the MOU between the COP and IFAD, and to present options to COP 10. As a compromise, some parties will try to develop text that indicates the GM shall transmit its reports to the President of IFAD for input by the Facilitation Committee. They also agreed to work on text regarding enhanced accountability.

BUDGET: In the morning, the Secretariat distributed a revised budget table. Delegates exchanged views on percentage growth of the Secretariat's budget for 2010-2011. Some delegates proposed a 3% increase, some supported zero nominal growth, while others noted that all the sub-programmes are important for the implementation of the Strategy, and said there must be budget growth. Some participants said three regional coordination offices should be funded from the core budget. One delegate said the cost of three regional offices plus the New York office would amount to 1 million Euros, and another said she could support RCMs only if they are budget neutral. In the evening, the group discussed the Secretariat's workplan and work programme.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While delegates at the budget group sharpened their pencils to cut the work programme in order to keep budget increases to a minimum, many developing countries were wondering how the activities being discussed in the contact groups, such as the creation of RCMs, would fit into this financially deserviced scenario. Some indicated they had hoped the option to merge the Secretariat and GM would produce enough savings for new activities, but most delegates recognize a proper merger is not on the table anymore.