

UNCCD COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2009

On the penultimate day of UNCCD COP 9, delegates convened in multiple contact groups throughout the day and into the night in order to conclude their deliberations on draft decisions. A plenary session convened throughout the day to conduct open dialogue sessions with civil society organizations.

PLENARY

OPEN DIALOGUE SESSIONS: COP 9 President Bibiloni opened the dialogue sessions with CSOs. He noted the CSOs' important role in an integrated approach to implementation and highlighted the need to go beyond declarations to provide concrete solutions.

Juan Luis Mérega, Fundación del Sur, coordinated the morning discussion. He called attention to CSOs' concern that they were given a slot on the second to last day of the COP, and thanked the few delegates who had come to the session.

Soledad Avila, Grupo Ambiental para el Desarrollo, discussed the process to make UNCCD COP 9 carbon neutral. She described the reforestation project in Argentina that will benefit from contributions to this project, and Nicole Werner, Fundación Ecoandina, described the solar cooker project.

Timothy Dlamini, Swaziland Farmer Development Foundation, presented on "Intervening for water access and SLM in rural areas in Africa." He discussed entry points for NGO activities into communities and described tools and approaches his organization uses to empower communities.

Susana Hakobyan, Environmental Survival, Armenia, presented national examples that demonstrated the complementarities of modern science and local technology related to sustainable agriculture methods and effective use of groundwater. She highlighted the role of CSO involvement in advancing the use of modern and traditional approaches.

Omar Núñez, Asociación Hondureña de Juntas Administradoras de Sistemas de Agua, said he represents an association of community groups that seeks to improve self-sufficient access to efficient, high quality water services through active participation of all stakeholders. He stated that the organization has expanded throughout most of Honduras and in Central America and the Caribbean.

CUBA highlighted the strong value of civil society in building awareness and communication, and the US emphasized CSOs' role in rapidly developing and implementing innovative solutions. BRAZIL described the role of CSOs in the "One Million Cisterns" project. The GM said CSOs are technical, political and financing partners with whom the GM works directly, including to develop Integrated Financing Strategies. The HOLY SEE described CSO participation in the "Argentine Dialogue," initiated in 2002.

A representative from Greenline lamented the "shallow" representation of country delegates and absence of the UNCCD Executive Secretary in the session. MEXICO said the CSO meeting should be held the first week of COP 10. The PHILIPPINES stressed that cost-benefit analyses should account for benefits such as indigenous labor and materials used and reductions in carbon emissions. NORWAY inquired about scaling up community projects, TANZANIA about government subsidies for cook stoves, and CAPE VERDE about power conflicts associated with decentralizing irrigation management.

PAKISTAN discussed his country's experience with underground water channels. ARGENTINA expressed support for the open dialogue, and FRANCE said the scheduling of the session should consider that delegates are unavailable when negotiations are taking place.

Daniela Tarizzo, Secretariat, said, although on the "wrong date," the convening of the open dialogue session demonstrates the Secretariat's engagement in ensuring CSO participation. A representative of the COP President committed to undertaking efforts to ensure that the CSO dialogue will take place at a more timely moment to enrich the COP 10 process.

When delegates convened 1.5 hours late in the afternoon for the second open dialogue session, Nicole Werner, EcoAndina Foundation, said CSOs would have appreciated an explanation regarding the delay.

Marisa Young, Agreste Foundation, Argentina, described her foundation's experiences in developing and undertaking a broad range of awareness raising and communication activities. Ariel González, Tierra Agua Hombre (TAHO), shared his organization's idea that at each COP an indigenous tree be planted from the previous COP's host country, and that a global competition to design an emblem for the tree should be initiated. He said the emblem would preside over subsequent COPs, and that "these emblems, to us, would be our Olympic torch."

Nino Sulkhaniashvili, EcoVision, Georgia, described the impacts of natural disasters and armed conflict on migration. She said EcoVision seeks to introduce sustainable development concepts in the country and described awareness-raising activities.

Werner read a statement on behalf of the CSOs eniD, Drynet, GTD and DCG, which indicated they had requested that the CSO dialogue be held in the first week of the COP. They said they attended the COP on external funding but that this was insufficient for the two weeks and that when they heard that the Secretariat would not change the date of the dialogue, they chose not to participate in it.

Aissatou Billy Sow, Guinean Association for the Promotion of Renewable Energies, drew attention to the particular plight of women in drylands and highlighted possible initiatives, such as community forests and improved cooking options to improve their livelihoods.

ISRAEL asked if the Georgian case had involved any assessment of the proportion of land degradation in and outside the drylands. He noted that there is disagreement among parties regarding whether the UNCCD is restricted to drylands or should consider land degradation, which he said has been found to be globally on a larger scale than in the drylands. TANZANIA asked about migration issues. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC noted the usefulness of national awareness raising activities. The World Bank said it values partnerships and indicated it would like to establish direct contacts with the participants to share experiences. ISRAEL suggested that CSOs could be more relevant to the COP discussions if they presented information on what they would like to see in the draft decisions. CHILE asked CSOs to consider how the issues raised could be translated into indicators.

Mercedes Fraile, Fundación Inti Cuyum, Argentina, discussed "Health and desertification: a field experience," recounting the consequences for the case study area when a wetland dried up, and the follow-up assistance and programmes delivered to the area. IFAP lamented that rural women are not adequately represented in the Convention.

CONTACT GROUPS

Following a meeting by all Chairs with the COP President, delegates continued deliberations into the night.

CRIC TOR: The group continued considering the draft decision addressing paragraphs on scope of the review process, but made slow progress as the group convened late in the afternoon and suspended discussions early due to an unscheduled regional group meeting.

CRIC: This group almost completed a first reading of a draft decision on improving procedures for communication and quality of the reports submitted to COP. Participants also heard clarifications from the GM on reporting formats related to financial issues. Participants agreed to request the Secretariat together with the GM to report to COP 10 and 11 on the effectiveness of the provisional performance and impact indicators and reporting procedures, after the first reporting cycle, for potential revision. The contact group also agreed that they would not go into detailed discussion on the provisional indicators contained in the annex, as this would need more time. They discussed text requesting the Secretariat to provide capacity building on monitoring, and on developed countries and other donors, including the GEF, to provide technical and financial assistance to affected countries in the fourth reporting cycle.

RCMs: Delegates discussed text on the use of budgetary and extrabudgetary resources for the functioning of the RCM offices, although one group opposed references to offices. During the day, negotiations were interrupted on several occasions for consultations. In the afternoon, delegates agreed for RCMs to include, "as appropriate *inter alia*, regional committees, thematic programme networks (TPNs) and RCUs." The GM suggested that participants identify functions to be performed by the GM rather than referring to relocating personnel. Delegates found agreement on some issues, including that the Executive Secretary and the GM Managing Director should support as appropriate the regional annexes in establishing and operating RCMs, ensuring that the work undertaken in order to facilitate regional cooperation does not duplicate the work done at headquarters.

JIU ASSESSMENT OF THE GM: Three parties introduced compromise text formulated in the morning that directs the GM to solicit the active input of the Facilitation Committee regarding the content of reports to the COP on the GM's activities. The text says the reports should be transmitted via the UNCCD Executive Secretary to the COP. To enhance accountability, the text requests the GM's Managing Director to present reports at each COP for scrutiny by parties.

Some parties believed the new text sufficiently addressed the issues of reporting and accountability. One participant said these new arrangements would necessitate removing the GM Managing Director's current role as co-chair of the Facilitation Committee. One regional group insisted that the text did not address their concerns regarding institutional arrangements. They stressed that the GM should be housed under the Executive Secretary. Another participant stressed that the group should not let discussions on scenarios "hijack" progress that could be made on those areas of the text not related to institutional arrangements, and delegates worked on these issues in an evening session.

BUDGET: On Wednesday, the group discussed the budget of the Secretariat until midnight, resulting in proposed cutting in the order of 1,700,000 Euros. Thursday morning, the group discussed the budget of the GM. The GM presented its revised budget with zero nominal growth. Several delegates expressed satisfaction with the level of the budget and others requested the GM and Secretariat to have a common budget format. Some delegates made proposals on staff and non-staff costs to be covered from the core budget of the GM.

IN THE CORRIDORS

A day after the COW deferred consideration of Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure (majority required when voting) to COP 10, conversations in the corridors indicated that notwithstanding the tradition of working by consensus, there was a move to break some of the deadlocks at COP 9 through voting.

In the afternoon, delegates gathered for an "important" announcement at the beginning of plenary, and then were told to return to their contact groups instead, with a resulting delay in the CSO meeting. Most said this confirmed that scheduling the open dialogue session on the penultimate day should not be repeated and the delay reflected poorly on the UNCCD's relationship with civil society. Others already braced for a long last plenary, expressing hopes that despite Thursday's comings and goings, the COP will be able to conclude in a timely manner.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COP 9 will be available on Monday, 5 October 2009 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/desert/cop9/>