



UNCCD COP 11 HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER

Delegates in Windhoek, Namibia, began consideration of the UNCCD COP 11 agenda on Tuesday morning, convening in three sessions during the day. The COW and CST began their deliberations in the morning, while the CRIC met in the afternoon.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Chair Chenchu Norbu opened the COW and parties adopted the COW agenda (ICCD/COP(11)/1). Parties also established contact groups on programme and budget facilitated by Sem Shikongo (Namibia) and other COW-related matters facilitated by Markku Aho (Finland).

Antigua and Barbuda, speaking for the LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC) tabled the region's objection to the UN Secretary-General's appointment of Monique Barbut (France) as the new UNCCD Executive Secretary and reiterated its request for an explanation for reversing the nomination of Paula Caballero (Colombia). Chair Norbu explained this issue would be taken up by the COP Bureau in the evening. PANAMA, COLOMBIA, MEXICO, PERU, COSTA RICA, ARGENTINA, HONDURAS, BRAZIL, GUATEMALA and ECUADOR stressed they could not adopt the agenda until further information on the selection process had been provided. COLOMBIA cautioned that the UNCCD risks setting a precedent for the UN system as a whole.

SWAZILAND, supported by ALGERIA and MOROCCO urged GRULAC not to "hold the COW to ransom."

INDEPENDENT MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY:

Introducing the report by the Intersessional Working Group (IWG), (ICCD/COP(11)/21), Barbara De Rosa-Joynt (US) highlighted the IWG's recommendations that, *inter alia*: the Convention's strategic objectives should be maintained but impact indicators should be revised; operational objectives should be updated to represent the results expected by 2018; and the Secretariat should continue to actively participate in the consultations related to the post-2015 development agenda. On the CST, she highlighted the report's call for improved use of scientific knowledge in UNCCD decision-making. On the CRIC, she stressed the need for improved data and information flows.

Several parties supported the recommendations. VIETNAM expressed hope they would lead to new indicators for monitoring DLDD. JORDAN said progress in the implementation of the Convention requires more financial resources. CUBA stressed each of the report's recommendations should be reflected in COP 11 decisions. She drew attention to recommendation 17, that COP 13 reach agreement on a revised strategy.

The EU emphasized his understanding that the purpose of the evaluation was not to modify but enhance the Strategy. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA said the evaluation implies possible discussions on the next phase of the Strategy.

MOROCCO said parties need time to internalize and implement recommendations. SWITZERLAND favored a pragmatic approach including: considering best practices; accounting for countries' respective economic situations; and increasing the Convention's visibility.

INDONESIA underlined a lack of financing, technological support and capacity building, while CHINA advocated intergovernmental cooperation and involvement of the private sector.

Algeria, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, called for clear definition of reporting responsibilities. INDIA said impact indicators need to be context specific. Seychelles, on behalf of SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS), called for the COP to consider SIDS in particular when addressing the recommendations.

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS OF THE GLOBAL MECHANISM

Lyndle Lindow, UNCCD Secretariat, introduced the Secretariat report (ICCD/COP(11)/3).

In the ensuing interventions, many parties urged for a decision on the new housing arrangements of the GM to be reached at COP 11.

Proposing to continue housing the GM in Rome, ITALY stressed the GM's mandate to mobilize funding, he said resource mobilization would be more efficient if the GM is located in the UN agricultural hub, and offered an additional €100,000 housing contribution.

Stressing that a fully operational GM is its primary interest, GERMANY highlighted arguments for a relocation of the GM to Bonn, including: cost-effectiveness; increased synergies between the GM and the Secretariat; and fostered cooperation between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC.

Many parties agreed with the recommendation to locate the GM with the Secretariat in Bonn, including: Uganda on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, COLOMBIA, GUATEMALA, SWITZERLAND, COOK ISLANDS and CUBA. While welcoming the report, ALGERIA, supported by HONDURAS, said some aspects need to be reviewed in light of commitments expressed by Italy. Emphasizing the GM should be housed in the most effective location to facilitate its work, PANAMA supported either IFAD or the World Bank.

SWITZERLAND opposed the way the evaluation had been carried out, saying it reflected the UNCCD Secretariat's preferences.

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

Chair Norbu invited parties to consider the programme and budget for the biennium 2014-2015 (ICCD/COP(11)/6 and Corr.1, ICCD/COP(11)/7 and Corr.1, ICCD/CRIC(12)/2-ICCD/COP(11)/CST/9) and the financial performance for the Convention trust funds (ICCD/COP(11)/8, ICCD/COP(11)/9),



ICCD/COP(11)/10, ICCD/COP(11)/11, ICCD/COP(11)/12, ICCD/COP(11)/13), which members of the Secretariat introduced.

On financial performance of the Convention trust funds (ICCD/COP(11)/6 and Corr.1, ICCD/COP(11)/7 and Corr.1) the Secretariat reported a lag in contributions, calling on parties to honor their commitments. Regarding the report on unaudited financial statements for the Convention trust funds for the GM, he said due to disputed expenses and unforeseen costs during appeals from employees, the Secretariat could not reach an agreement.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

After introductory remarks by CST Chair Antônio Rocha Magalhães (Brazil), delegates adopted the provisional agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/1) with the understanding that it may be adjusted.

Chair Magalhães proposed the establishment of a contact group facilitated by Nicholas Hanley (Ireland) and suggested joint meetings between the CRIC, CST and the *Ad Hoc* Group of Technical Experts (AGTE) on best practices and knowledge sharing. The Committee then adopted the final report of the CST (ICCD/CST(S-3)/7).

THE ROSTER OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

The Secretariat introduced the roster of independent experts contained in ICCD/COP(11)/15, and invited comments on the proposal to revise and update details of existing national experts, and to propose new candidates to ensure representation of all relevant disciplines, including local and traditional knowledge, women and geographical regions.

JAPAN and ARGENTINA voiced concerns regarding the rosters' length and its accessibility for remote users. CUBA, NIGER, PAKISTAN, and SWITZERLAND supported initializing a study by the Secretariat to analyze the roster's usefulness. The US expressed doubts on the roster's benefits.

Chair Magalhães referred the matter to a contact group for further discussion.

ORGANIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL, INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/3, ICCD/COP(11)/CST/INF.1 and ICCD/COP(11)/CST/INF.2) and invited Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group to further discuss the options for the provision of Scientific Advice (AGSA) to present its recommendations. Akhtar-Schuster highlighted recommendations for a modular approach to building an integrated science-policy interface (SPI). She explained the proposed approach could include a science-policy platform, regional science and technology hubs, and an Independent Group of Scientists (IGS).

On modalities for the proposed SPI approach, Akhtar-Schuster stated it could be co-governed by the CST and IGS, with administrative support of the UNCCD Secretariat, under overall COP oversight.

While welcoming the AGSA's proposals for strengthening scientific advice for the COP, the EU stressed the need to enhance synergies among existing science-policy platforms including the CST, the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

MOROCCO, SWITZERLAND, IRAN, CAMEROON, ARGENTINA, CUBA and others said adopting AGSA's recommendations could undermine and duplicate work of existing UNCCD advisory bodies, including the roster of independent experts and regional coordinating units. SWITZERLAND expressed concern that the proposed SPI's strong administrative links to the UNCCD would make it difficult to offer independent advice. She suggested merging the SPI and IGS to form a permanent working group under the CST.

ARGENTINA noted that an IGS drawn on the UNCCD Scientific Conferences would not be a representative forum for policy-making. While supporting the proposed regional approach, BRAZIL noted it would be expensive, complex, and result in additional bureaucracy. JAPAN regretted the AGSA report did not address financial implications.

ITALY described the AGSA report as an important step forward in defining the functions of the SPI and proposed further work to refine proposals. ISRAEL called for emphasis on the "P" in the SPI, through enhanced links to IPBES.

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE UNCCD FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

The Secretariat presented the report on the progress of the fellowship programme (ICCD/COP(11)/CST/8). The Democratic Republic of the Congo, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, said the topic was not "ripe enough" for a decision. Chair Magalhães indicated the CST could return to the item later.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Calling on delegates to focus on developing decisions providing clear direction to the Secretariat, the GM and others, CRIC Chair Rowen (US) opened CRIC 12. Parties adopted the CRIC agenda (ICCD/CRIC(12)/1), established a contact group facilitated by Luis Estuardo Rios González (Guatemala) and planned two joint CST/CRIC contact group meetings for Wednesday and Thursday.

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND THE STRATEGY

The Secretariat introduced documents on the multi-year work plans, the performance of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies, and the CRIC 11 report (ICCD/CRIC(12)/2, ICCD/CRIC(12)/3, ICCD/CRIC(11)/19 and ICCD/CRIC(11)/19/Add.1).

Côte d'Ivoire, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, JORDAN and SENEGAL, called for increased resource mobilization to enable the implementation of the Convention. KIRIBATI highlighted the complexity of the GEF funding process.

On resource mobilization strategies, CHINA called on the CST to increase cooperation with FAO, while MEXICO encouraged the Secretariat and GM to participate in regional ministerial meetings on environment, food and agriculture.

JAPAN underlined that agreeing to the activities presented does not mean endorsement of a budget increase.

CHINA expressed concern about the limited reporting by parties and called for improved impact indicators and assessments at global and national levels.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Although attention was divided between proceedings in the COW and CST, delegates' conversations mainly focused on the CST's discussion of the establishment of a scientific body to inform on scientific and technical matters of the Convention. Some delegates felt taking this step would once again suggest superiority of UNFCCC by "copy-cattin'" the IPCC's establishment. Other delegates suggested a body other than IPBES would be a "waste of money," while one delegate was overheard saying that "scientists are too often scared of policy-makers." One seasoned delegate felt that participants did not understand the distinction between politics and science, and another commented that it is ironic that talks on bringing in scientific advice to the process focused so much on cost, stating that the "process to bring these suggestions to the table cost much more than the estimated costs of operationalizing them!"

Looking forward to the fresh approach of joint CST-CRIC contact group meetings scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, one delegate recited CRIC chair Rowen's motivating words that "our job here is to ensure that we support increased effectiveness and our decisions should support implementing our strategy and beyond."