



UNCCD COP 11 HIGHLIGHTS: FRIDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2013

On Friday, the COP convened an open dialogue session with CSOs on the theme: resource mobilization to support the implementation of the UNCCD through building effective partnerships between national and international actors.

Throughout the day and evening, COW, CRIC and CST contact groups continued work on draft decisions. In the evening the CST convened for its closing session where parties adopted nine decisions. In the early hours of Saturday morning, the COP reconvened to consider the preliminary report of the COW, and adopted the CST's recommendations with one minor revision.

INCLUSION OF ACTIVITIES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COP: OPEN DIALOGUE SESSION

Thomas Tichelmann (EU) opened the interactive dialogue session.

Describing CSOs as important engineers and promoters of participatory approaches, UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja welcomed CSOs, stating their messages should be heard by decision makers.

COP President Uahekua Herunga introduced moderator Patrice Burger, Centre d'Action et de Réalisations Internationales (CARI), and opened the panel discussion.

PANEL DISCUSSION 1: ADDRESSING RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:

Marioldy Sanchez Santivañez, Asociación para la Investigación y el Desarrollo Integral (AIDER), Peru, lamented that the dryland forests of Peru fall outside of remit of the UNFCCC because of a definitional issue, and therefore are not eligible for REDD+ projects. Santivañez noted the need to exercise caution when exploring opportunities to work with the private sector.

Fatima Ahmed, Zenab for Women in Development, Sudan, said empowering rural women helps alleviate poverty, improve food security, and enhance SLM. She lamented difficulties NGOs face in accessing GEF funding.

Eileen de Ravin, UNDP's Equator Initiative, said mobilizing resources is not only about funding, and that people on the ground contribute knowledge and human capacity. She recommended the Initiative's publication "The Power of Local Action," as a useful resource on scaling up successful local practices.

In the ensuing discussion, the GEF reported on joint programmes with CSOs, noting the Community Exchange and Train Program.

the PHILIPPINES, EGYPT, SEYCHELLES, SUDAN and others reported their national experience with CSO partnerships working on land degradation and SLM issues, and highlighted the important role of women. PERU said governments and the UNCCD must harness CSOs to solve land management issues, and described her country's domestic efforts to improve cooperation with CSOs.

CHINA, while recognizing the significance of CSOs, underscored the importance of the private sector in DLDD, highlighting the creation of a fund to combat desertification by over 100 Chinese firms.

Stressing the importance of CSO involvement in grassroots activities, UNEP reported that CSOs play a lead role in 30% of UNEP/GEF projects on land degradation, biodiversity, and climate change, and an active role in 67% of projects.

PANEL DISCUSSION 2: ADDRESSING RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL:

Lee Sung-gil, Future Forest, presented on combating desertification and dust storms. He said cooperation amongst Korean and Chinese NGOs and local governments helped create the "Korea-China Friendship Great Green Wall," a 16 km long and 0.6 km wide windbreak consisting of millions of trees in the Kubugi desert.

Christian Houdus, DRYNET, highlighted: the reduction of voluntary funding of civil society under the UNCCD over time; the need for adopting a cautious approach to private sector investment under the UNCCD; and ambiguity over the concept of ZNLD, which could be understood as a target for slowing down or halting land degradation, or as a type of compensation mechanism offering a "license" to degrade.

Jean-Marc Sinnassamy, GEF, explained the intellectual, data and financial resources, including the Small Grants Programme, available to CSOs via the GEF.

In the ensuing discussion, ISRAEL supported Houdus's call to clarify ZNLD. CHINA explained desert sand storms are a consequence of an imbalance between land capacity and economic development pressure, resulting in relocation of production and inhabitants.

SWITZERLAND pointed to the example of the Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats (TEMA), which contributed to the formulation and acceptance of a Turkish soil law. TURKEY called on delegates to increase their voluntary contributions and noted other avenues to help CSOs, citing Turkey's organization



of workshops and training for CSOs on land issues. He also said parties should invite CSOs to be members of national coordination units.

Responding to a question from the US, Houdus said bringing CSOs into the discussions on funding guidelines could enable more organizations to qualify for financing.

CONTACT GROUPS

WORKPLANS AND BUDGET: As it awaited the outcome of decisions from other contact groups that may have budget implications, the group met in the afternoon to consider general questions relating to core budget requirements, special trust funds, indicative contributions, and implications of the core budget limitations.

IWG, GM AND ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: On the IWG report, agreement was reached on requesting the Executive Secretary to propose for parties' consideration at COP 12 a process for developing a new strategy and plans to further improve the implementation of the Convention. Other recommendations from the IWG report were forwarded to the relevant contact groups for incorporation into decision texts.

With regard to text prepared by a drafting group on GM housing arrangements, the contact group faced major difficulties in coming to an agreement before the beginning of the COP.

ALIGNMENT OF ACTION PROGRAMMES WITH THE STRATEGY: In the afternoon, the CRIC contact group continued work on a draft decision on enhancing alignment and implementation of action programmes with the Strategy. Delegates asked the Secretariat to prepare clearer text on the relationship between NAPs and integrated financial strategy (IFS).

JOINT CRIC-CST CONTACT GROUP ON MEASURING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 1, 2 AND 3: On Friday afternoon a joint CST/CRIC contact group continued discussing draft decisions on how to best measure progress on strategic objectives 1-3 of the Strategy, which included draft text on ways to implement the delineation of areas affected by DLDD, and revising the provisionally adopted set of impact indicators. On the delineation of areas, delegates expressed different views, and Chair Hanley referred the text to the CST plenary. The contact group successfully concluded negotiations on improvement of knowledge management including traditional knowledge best practices and success stories, and the SKBP.

CST CONTACT GROUP ON A SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE: In the morning, the group continued consideration of measures that would enable the UNCCD to become a global authority, negotiating modalities for the establishment and composition of a scientific body. While they failed to reach consensus on the exact model to use, delegates agreed to a limited SPI body, the form and function of which will be reviewed at COP 13. Discussions later in the day included re-shaping the operation of the CST in line with the Strategy, the organization of future UNCCD Scientific Conferences, and the work programme of CST.

EVENING PLENARIES

REVIEW OF CST RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COP: On Friday evening, the CST Plenary, led by Chair Magalhães, adopted nine draft decisions to forward to the COP for adoption (ICCD/ COP(11)/CST/L.1-9). On measures to enable the UNCCD to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification or land degradation, and mitigation of the effects of drought, BRAZIL, with ARGENTINA, COLOMBIA, PERU and MEXICO,

although supporting the need for a scientific interface with policy makers, said the mechanisms already exist, and merely require strengthening. He requested, opposed by the US, to include reference to the roster of independent experts as an additional source of scientific advice. After some debate, the US conceded to allow this inclusion.

Chair Magalhães reported on discussions of the CST workplan contained as part of document ICCD/CRIC(12)/2-ICCD/ COP(11)/CST/9 and explained the related draft decision on the draft multi-year workplan of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies, will be tabled in the CRIC session.

Expressing concern that there are still ongoing discussions on the concept of land degradation neutrality and the Rio+20 outcomes, BRAZIL requested, and parties agreed to, the deletion of reference to this topic in draft decision ICCD/COP(11)/CST/L.5.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE PRESIDENT: The CST then elected four vice-chairs on the Bureau of CST 12: Fouad Chehat (Algeria), Allaadeen Mohammed Al Sharjabi (Yemen), Hamid Custovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Sonia Gonzalez (Peru).

COP

CONSIDERATION OF THE PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: On behalf of COP President Uahekua Herunga, Neville Gertze (Namibia), welcomed delegates and introduced Chenchu Norbu (Bhutan) to report on the outcomes of the COW. Norbu explained that no draft decisions had been made available.

REVIEW OF CST RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COP: CST Chair Magalhães presented the recommendations of the CST to the COP, and indicated that the decisions would be included in the CST's report to the COP. On reshaping the operation of the CST, Brazil suggested, and parties agreed to, removing reference to degradation neutrality in the title of the 4th Scientific Conference as found in the ICCD/COP(11)/CST/L.7. All other CST recommended decisions were adopted without amendment.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE PRESIDENT: The COP elected Heimata Louisa Karika (Cook Islands) as Rapporteur of the COP 11, and nominated Uriel Safriel (Israel) for election as CST Chair at its last session on 27 September 2013.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Friday began with the first-ever civil society protest on the grounds of a UNCCD COP. The CSOs "closing in" on the UNCCD, after years of rather reserved participation, may have set an important precedent for future COPs.

Observing the demonstration, a rather bemused delegate, nevertheless welcomed this "sign of new life," as he put it, noting it could be a start towards rebalancing the top-down nature of the SPI discussions. After all, as many parties expressed during the process of adopting the SKBP, the portal aims to create space for fresh perspectives by facilitating the sharing of best practices at the international level.

Later, as delegates hashed out compromises in the contact groups, it seemed to warm up the desert chill that had descended out of nowhere, presaging convergence on what had seemed to be intractable differences on some issues, notably the GM housing arrangements, and the form a SPI would take. Indeed, by the time the COP plenary convened at 12:40am on Saturday, the atmosphere was positively cordial as parties swiftly adopted the draft decisions. Perhaps the prospect of spending the weekend on a dune adventure, as was evident by the many scenes of delegates scanning glossy brochures in the afternoon sun, might not have been so far fetched after all.