



## UNCCD COP 11 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2013

The High-Level segment at UNCCD COP 11 opened on 23 September, with welcoming statements from the host government, the UNCCD Executive Secretary and a representative of the UN Secretary-General, as well as special statements from regional and interest groups. Two Ministerial round tables then considered: "The role of the UNCCD in achieving a LDNW in the context of sustainable development;" and "Overcoming the hurdles of scaling up and disseminating good practices in the context of the UNCCD implementation process." Throughout the day, COW contact groups on budget and non-budgetary matters and the CRIC contact group on strengthening relationships with relevant Conventions and international organizations, continued work on draft decisions. In the evening, the UNCCD Secretariat hosted a high-level dinner during which awards were presented to three winners of the second Land for Life Award and five recipients of the Drylands Champions award.

### HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

COP President Uahekua Herunga welcomed delegates and introduced Namibian Deputy Prime Minister, Marco Hausiku, to deliver statements by the Prime Minister, Hage Geingob, and the President, Hifikepunye Pohamba. Hausiku commended outgoing UNCCD Executive Secretary, Luc Gnacadja, for his efforts to integrate DLDD and soil issues in the Rio+20 outcome and pledged Namibia's support under the incoming leadership of Monique Barbut.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja expressed the COP's solidarity with Kenya during the ongoing terrorist attack. He highlighted the unique opportunity for the Convention to establish a new paradigm to achieve the vision of a LDNW, welcoming the dialogue on how to move forward.

Veerle Vandeweerd, Director, Environment and Energy Group, UNDP, on behalf of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, commended outgoing Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja and underscored that healthy land is a prerequisite for food and water security, and averting political instability.

### SPECIAL STATEMENTS AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL ON BEHALF OF REGIONAL AND INTEREST GROUPS:

Fiji, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, expressed hope that COP 11 would take care of outstanding housekeeping issues, enabling parties to focus on implementation of the Convention. Highlighting that critical information gaps and reporting difficulties have hampered the Strategy's objectives, he called, inter alia, for: empowering the RCUs; maintaining current budget levels and improving the UNCCD's cost efficiency; and ensuring a robust replenishment of DLDD funding in the next GEF replenishment. He further stressed that developing country parties need a strong and effective GM that will support their specific financial needs.

Lithuania, on behalf of the EU, said science and technology issues should be prioritized if the UNCCD is to become a global authority on DLDD. He noted that IPBES could promote a global and integrated approach, with land degradation as a major issue, and stated that all COP decisions must contain a cost assessment.

Burkina Faso, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, called on the COP to produce efficient, operational strategies with measurable targets. He said the incoming Executive Secretary should prioritize cooperation with the GEF to increase the allocation for land and supported the GM's transfer to the Secretariat, stating it would result in cost savings and enhance governance.

India, on behalf of ASIA-PACIFIC STATES, indicated support for a mechanism that can invigorate and streamline scientific efforts, and for the Changwon Initiative. He said recommendations of the mid-term evaluation should guide formation of a roadmap with specific timeframes to address DLDD.

Panama, on behalf of GRULAC, underscored the need for predictable and adequate resources to strengthen his region's RCU. He called for reducing inefficiencies and overspending, and for being precise when using the term land degradation. He reiterated GRULAC's concern over the selection process for the UNCCD Executive Secretary, and underscored that improved dissemination of best practices is key to moving forward on DLDD.

Belarus, on behalf of the CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES, said his region is determined to transform political will at Rio+20 into action-oriented COP 11 decisions. He highlighted that the UNCCD brings together countries that deal with drylands as well as other land degradation issues, giving the Convention strength and complexity. He noted regional efforts, including a synergistic approach to implementing GEF projects under the Rio Conventions and efforts to align NAPs with the Strategy, and develop a regional strategy.

Israel, on behalf of the NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION, highlighted that this group includes developed and developing countries and therefore functions as a laboratory for implementation. He said the region has accepted the invitation of Turkey to establish a RCU and looks forward to cooperation with the UNCCD Secretariat in this regard.

Both Ends, on behalf of CSOs, lamented that COP discussions and documents seldom reference specific DLDD drivers, which she said are related to unsustainable practices of large agribusiness. She urged parties to secure the UNCCD's independence by ensuring accredited observers are committed to sustainable development of drylands, also noting that land tenure insecurity hinders investment and SLM.



The National Youth Council of Namibia, on behalf of YOUTH, said young people aim to ensure “those who come after us will find our world in the best condition to farm, live and make a living,” noting youth are already involved and must be listened to.

The UNCCD Secretariat screened a short film highlighting global activities to combat DLDD.

**ROUND TABLE I: THE ROLE OF THE UNCCD IN ACHIEVING A LAND DEGRADATION-NEUTRAL WORLD IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE**

**DEVELOPMENT:** COP President Herunga introduced the session, which was co-chaired by Bernice Adiku Heloo, Deputy Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana, and Susheel Kumar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, India. The session was moderated by Clare Short, former Secretary of State for International Development, UK.

Co-Chair Heloo reiterated the Rio+20 objective of taking leadership in monitoring DLDD globally and restoring degraded areas in different climatic zones.

Reminding that 78% of degraded areas are not in drylands, Moderator Short said inaction has consequences for food security and biodiversity loss.

Keynote speaker Uriel Safriel, Blaustein Institute for Desert Research, Israel, elaborated on the meaning of LDNW, distinguishing between: having a state of land degradation; and land that is in the process of being degraded. Warning that 25% of the world’s land is currently in a state of degradation, he described the vicious circle of biophysical processes driven by land users through persistent productivity loss, that lead to poverty and cause social, economic and political problems. He underscored that awareness raising should start at the community level.

Timo Mäkelä, European Commission, emphasized that 60% of lands required to meet future food, feed and fiber needs are already degraded or under threat. He said COP 11 is a “make or break” meeting and called on the UNCCD to: solve its institutional issues; build a framework for gathering and sharing scientific knowledge; and better mobilize resources and civil society and other stakeholders.

Edna Molewa, South African Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, expressed concern about the impact of DLDD on ecosystems services. She stressed that concerted international effort is needed to implement a LDNW by 2030, and said other Conventions must involve themselves in DLDD issues to facilitate real progress.

During panel presentations, IRAN emphasized ensuring a greater synergistic approach, and said the Changwon Initiative brings new hope for implementing the Convention. SENEGAL highlighted the relationship between SLM and economic growth, and called for a better understanding of the drivers of land degradation. UNDP suggested that: national governments should work through and with the One UN country teams; local level efforts could focus on scaling up a few successful projects; and delegates should consider ways to incorporate LDNW objectives into SDG targets on water, food security and poverty.

In the ensuing discussion, speakers highlighted their countries’ efforts to implement integrated approaches to combat DLDD and poverty.

CHINA, BRAZIL and the US cautioned against using the Rio+20 outcome to expand the UNCCD’s mandate beyond drylands. The US stressed the need for better science, and, with CSOs expressed concern that the concept of land degradation neutrality could encourage off-setting and exacerbate DLDD.

LESOTHO underscored the continuing relevance of Strategic Objectives 1 and 2 of the Convention. GAMBIA, ERITREA, MALAWI and ZAMBIA stressed DLDD is manifested at the local level, requiring formulation of local targets and actions, while MALAWI underlined the UNCCD’s role to facilitate assessments and inventories.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA urged consensus building on target-setting, and highlighted the Changwon Initiative. ANGOLA stressed the need to create capacities to reduce food insecurity and enhance SLM and called for integrating DLDD and climate change strategies. Noting the Convention is an instrument for international solidarity for people living in drylands, a CSO representative said cooperation with other Rio Conventions will foster action on SLM.

**ROUND TABLE II: OVERCOMING HURDLES OF SCALING UP AND DISSEMINATING GOOD PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UNCCD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS:** Neville Gertze, Namibian Ambassador to Germany, and Michel Mordasini, Assistant Director-General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, co-chaired this session.

Moderator Dennis Garrity, UNCCD Drylands Ambassador, said scaling up is “where this Convention should come alive.” He presented the Great Green Wall in the Sahel as a key example of a successful DLDD-combating partnership.

Keynote speaker Chris Reij, World Resources Institute, said scaling up drylands re-greening projects entails: identifying and analyzing re-greening successes; working at the grassroots; ensuring top-down meets bottom-up; developing a good communications strategy; and developing agroforestry value chains. Yacouba Sawadogo, a farmer from the Sahel, Burkina Faso, described his efforts in combating desertification by developing sapling- and dung-filled planting holes which conserve water, protect saplings, and promote biodiversity. He further described efforts to bring birds, and with them a greater diversity of seeds and trees, to his lands. He closed by describing the film about his life: “The Man who Stopped the Desert.”

Salif Ouédraogo, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Burkina Faso, noted that hurdles to SLM include weak capacity, illiteracy, financial constraints, poor monitoring and oversight systems, lack of investment in SLM mechanisms, and land insecurity.

The Round Table will continue on Tuesday morning.

**CONTACT GROUPS**

During CRIC contact group discussions, parties advanced on the formulation of advocacy policy frameworks, clarifying their views on adequate guidance to the Secretariat and discussing the GM’s role in promoting resource mobilization. The group also discussed national monitoring systems, including issues of: establishment, maintenance and use of existing systems; use of synergies among national natural resource monitoring systems; and need for flexibility in monitoring.

During discussions in the COW contact group on non-budget matters that addressed, inter alia: regional coordination mechanisms; the comprehensive communication strategy; and accreditation of CSOs and the private sector, some parties highlighted budgetary implications.

The COW contact group on programme and budget matters continued discussions on issues related to the budget, with parties seeking clarity on several budgetary concerns.

**IN THE CORRIDORS**

As negotiations in the COW contact groups moved into their second week, a number of delegates noted they were “holding their breath” on some issues because outcomes of several contact groups were tied to discussions in others. Participants particularly pointed to the interconnection between decisions on the location of the GM and the budgetary implications that would be considered in the programme and budget contact group. As the High-level segment began its discussion of the goal of a LDNW, some participants noted discussions related to the post-2015 development agenda were set to begin several hours later in conjunction with the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York. While some thought the two events would involve different audiences, others suggested that the overlap had resulted in a “low level, high-level event” in Windhoek.