



## **UNCCD COP 11 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2013**

The second part of the COP 11 open dialogue session convened on Wednesday morning, on the theme of capacity building for CSOs. COW contact groups negotiating budget and non-budget matters, and the contact group on CRIC-related matters convened throughout the day and evening.

### ***INCLUSION OF ACTIVITIES OF NGOS WITHIN THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMME OF THE COP: OPEN DIALOGUE SESSION***

COP Vice-President Thomas Tichelmann (Ireland) welcomed delegates to the second and final open dialogue session at COP 11 on capacity building for CSOs for the implementation of the Convention, commenting that the onset of heavy rain could signal “a fresh start” of COP discussions.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Gnacadja highlighted key messages from the first open dialogue session, noting CSOs’ strong call for capacity building for actors on the ground had informed the decision to devote a full session to this topic. He also highlighted the launch of UNCCD Capacity Building Marketplace as a milestone towards strengthening capacity for the implementation of the Strategy.

Tichelmann then welcomed Mary Seely, Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), to moderate the session.

**PANEL DISCUSSION 1: CAPACITY BUILDING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:** Moderator Seely introduced the session and welcomed the three panelists.

Kenneth Ganeb, DRFN, highlighted capacity-building activities through the Forum for Integrated Resources Management initiative. He described the Forum’s aim to strengthen technical and management capacities of community-based organizations, such as women’s groups and farmers associations, and encourage their involvement in decision-making processes for SLM.

Vivian Kinyaga, Director, DRFN, outlined activities of the Summer Land Care Programme, a capacity-building initiative undertaken in collaboration with national research and training institutions, and other local and international partners. She said the internship and mentoring programme aims to strengthen the capacity of young scientists and students to apply research for problem solving, and foster critical thinking.

Maria Tharacky Namupala, Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa, highlighted the network’s efforts to increase political recognition and human rights for San communities in the sub-region, centered on inclusive education at all levels. While welcoming growing recognition of indigenous peoples’ issues, she stressed the need for

full compliance in the sub-region with international legal frameworks such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Concluding “anything for us without us is against us,” she urged parties to involve indigenous peoples in UNCCD decision-making processes.

In the ensuing discussion, Settar Aslan, President, Trade Union of Turkish Agriculture and Forestry Laborers, said global warming, erosion and desertification are the results of “aggressive production methods,” and stressed if global action is not undertaken, “we are doomed to fail.” He urged countries to not only consider expenses to combat global challenges in terms of costs and benefits, because “you cannot put a price on the water we drink and the air we breathe.”

The PHILIPPINES underscored the role of CSOs in nation-building but lamented that many lack necessary support and assistance to carry out their work. He requested the Secretariat insert this issue into the work programme of the COP.

BURKINA FASO said we need to think globally but act locally, and that the private sector, government and civil society must work in solidarity with one another. He said only through dialogues such as the CSO dialogue and similar ones at the national level can progress be made on sustainable development. He urged CSOs to ensure this dialogue expands to encompass those most vulnerable.

KENYA explained his country is opening up to more CSO involvement and that formulation and implementation of his country’s NAP has been mostly driven by CSOs, producing benefits for general policy development as well.

**PANEL DISCUSSION 2: CAPACITY BUILDING AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL:** Moderator Seely introduced the panelists. Nahideh Naghizadeh, CENESTA, Iran, highlighted activities to align Iran’s NAP with the Strategy that included participatory capacity building workshops for key stakeholders at community level, enabling them to undertake critical analyses of their situation, envision a desirable future, and develop a road map and action plan towards this future. Naghizadeh noted the workshops had not only raised awareness among affected communities, they had also contributed to building sustainable relationships between community-based organizations, government officials and UNCCD focal points responsible for NAP alignment.

Fatima Kaba, ENDA-TM, Senegal, reviewed her organization’s efforts to connect actors and actions at the local level with those at the international level, and described efforts to develop a platform through which CSOs could develop a common vision and build capacity to participate in political events, such as the COP. She said priorities of CSOs in the



region include food security, new and renewable energies, agroforestry and sustainable natural resource management. She also highlighted efforts to ensure that work on the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel (GGWSS) initiative takes local concerns into account, and noted local communities see it as both a development and environmental project.

Wang Wenbiao, CEO Elion, China, described his company's desertification-control activities in the Kubuqi Desert. He encouraged CSOs to combine public and market interests in their work. Based on his company's experiences, He recommended: encouraging migration from the desert to settlements offering employment opportunities in industries, allowing the desert to restore itself naturally; protecting the ecosystem through efforts to contain the desert; building roads so that machinery can be used to combat the desert more effectively; and introducing science and technology to combat desertification.

Nathalie van Haren, Both ENDS, the Netherlands, presented on DRYNET success stories, including the re-cultivation of saffron on previously cotton-dominated fields in Turkey, which had become salty and nutrient-poor, and that resulted in improved ecological, social and economic opportunities. She also described an organic roiboos tea cooperative in South Africa that created quality standards that helped protect local ecology and promote premium prices. She offered recommendations for delegates on ways to facilitate CSO work to develop context-relevant projects and increase the capacities of communities and local CSOs.

In the ensuing discussion, the US suggested civil society dialogues often overly concentrate on relationships between delegations and CSOs, and lauded presenters for explaining the relationships between CSOs and local people and offering suggestions on how delegates can assist in this work. Beatriz Araújo, Association Caatinga, described her association of 1,400 NGOs working on sustainable development in Brazil's semi-arid Caatinga region. She lauded parties and the Secretariat for encouraging CSOs and youth participation in the UNCCD process.

SENEGAL said Senegalese CSOs are involved at the highest levels and called for funding and capacity support to enhance multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with local communities. PERU noted that CSOs are important actors in combating desertification in her country, and are valuable in sharing experience and best practice, and ensuring planning is comprehensive and holistic.

Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) questioned how to make civil society activities more interdisciplinary, and suggested incorporating the post-2015 development agenda into UNCCD discussions. LIBYA highlighted initiatives to collaborate with CSOs in grassroots activities, noting his country's efforts to regenerate saffron production.

Patrice Burger, CARI, France, thanked panelists for the diverse perspectives shared, noting their experiences can be multiplied many times over in drylands. He cautioned that all good practices are context-specific and some models, such as the Kubuqi desert initiative, may be difficult to replicate at the global level as few countries are in a position to offer alternative livelihoods to communities affected by DLDD. INDIA highlighted his country's integrated watershed management programme, stating CSOs currently implement 25% of project activities.

CHINA outlined lessons from its national activities to combat DLDD, observing the experiences shared had provided much room for thought. He noted that the Elion experience is "one approach," but is typical of his government's efforts to prioritize and delineate development zones, informed by science, and

environmental and social cost-benefit analyses. In conclusion, he stressed the need to build on Confucian values when enacting policies for limiting or exploiting the desert, saying "we must not forget the culture and livelihoods of people living in the desert."

BRAZIL emphasized the need to help prepare young leaders for the future. KENYA suggested using tax waivers to assist local communities' efforts to launch new products.

In final responses by panelists Wang noted companies need to promote activities in the public interest as well as to make money, and reviewed projects that can provide farmers with revenue, such as creating favorable conditions for tourism and planting trees. Kaba noted problems in communicating the value of the GGWSS project at local level was overcome by holding meetings with grassroots organizations, and integrating the project in local development and investment planning. Naghizadeh said CSOs are working with local and national institutions to re-empower indigenous populations, especially in their role in combating DLDD.

Closing the session, Vice-President Tichelmann noted such dialogues offer opportunities for delegations to build their capacity as much as for CSOs to build theirs.

### CONTACT GROUPS

Discussions in the COW contact group on non-budget matters considered how to incorporate the IWG's recommendations on regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs), with some parties expressing concern on the financial implications of extending the capacity of RCMs. The group reached agreement on a draft decision on the UN Decade for Deserts and the fight against Desertification (UNDDD), and continued negotiations on accreditation of CSOs and the private sector to the COP, discussing the participation of indigenous peoples, local communities and youth. In the evening, the contact group reconvened to discuss GM-related matters.

In the morning, the CRIC contact group resumed discussions on a draft decision regarding the iterative process for assessing implementation. Among other issues, delegates considered ways to simplify reporting and the Secretariat's role in addressing some parties' difficulties with continuous national data collection and processing. In the afternoon and evening, the contact group began reviewing a draft decision on financial flows for the implementation of the Convention. Delegates from the budget group joined the CRIC contact group to negotiate a draft decision on collaboration with the GEF.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

As participants ran between raindrops and thunder claps for a second day, some at COP 11 suggested that one of the meeting's "outcomes" might be remembered as bringing rain to the Namibian desert. With participants also running between contact group meetings, some suggested it was too early to anticipate the outcomes for some of the key decisions. Some added that, on a few issues, discussions were focused on whether the topic should be addressed in a Friends of the Chair or full contact group. Other discussions were said to involve a review of the history of certain UNCCD decisions, assurances regarding the level of national commitment to the Convention, and proposals regarding whether to reference specific, national-level initiatives in the outcome documents. One delegate called the decision on the Rio+20 outcome the "elephant in the room," while others recalled that negotiations often "expand to fill the time available," and wondered what would trigger the final deadline.