



UNCCD COP 12 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2015

UNCCD COP 12 participants convened in the CST during the morning and afternoon. An afternoon plenary dialogue with CSOs also took place. Contact groups met throughout the day, to discuss draft decisions related to the COP, CRIC and CST agendas.

PLENARY

CSO DIALOGUE: Sedat Kadioglu, Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, opened the session, which was moderated by Noel Oetlé, Environmental Monitoring Group, South Africa. Rajeb Boulharouf, UNCCD Secretariat, introduced the theme, “Demystifying LDN with CSO Contributions,” and thanked Turkey and Switzerland for financially supporting the Civil Society Panel.

In a keynote address, Jonathan Davies, IUCN, underscored that SLM can, *inter alia*: support poverty reduction; contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation; conserve biodiversity; support food security; reduce disaster risks; and protect watersheds. He lauded CSO efforts to support LDN and called for a focus on strengthening natural resource governance and ensuring human rights, gender equity and tenure security.

Aissatou Billy Sow, AGUIPER, Guinea, presented CSO experiences in implementing SLM activities in Africa. She stressed the need for further development of indicators for land degradation, and CSO involvement in NAPs and Integrated Investment Frameworks. Marioldy Sánchez Santivañez, AIDER, Peru, presented examples of SLM good practices in Latin America and the Caribbean involving local populations. She emphasized that any LDN initiative must be an opportunity to strengthen the NAP and be integrated into it.

Tanveer Arif, SCOPE, Pakistan, outlined diverse CSO-led land restoration projects in the Asian region. Expressing concern that communities might become the “ultimate losers” of LDN investments, he called for balancing social and ecological approaches, with the consent of affected communities. Serkan Aykut, Foresters’ Association of Turkey, described outreach activities, including a television programme on reducing the effects of climate change, student excursions to forestlands and distribution of tree seedlings.

Gloria Musowa, Kasisi Agricultural Training Center, Zambia, referred to the 2014 Equator Initiative Prize which identified 12 CSO projects covering activities such as ecotourism, community reforestation and water harvesting. Discussing the relevance of land issues across the SDGs, Patrice Burger, CARI, said that investments in agriculture are four times more effective for poverty reduction than in any other sector. He described the many ecosystem services provided by soils and lands, and

advocated for the implementation of the SDGs notwithstanding uncertainties around the LDN concept. He regretted the very low participation of country parties at this plenary dialogue with CSOs.

Oetlé invited countries involved in the LDN pilot project to share their experiences. TURKEY noted that LDN data should be based on each country’s context and capabilities. NAMIBIA said his country’s LDN targets focused on reducing bush encroachment and improving livelihoods at the community level. SENEGAL stressed that LDN requires a paradigm shift in managing degraded lands, highlighting the strong involvement of CSOs.

BENIN noted that LDN is the ultimate goal of the Convention, hence it is not a new concept. TANZANIA emphasized that LDN is a long-term process, which requires making a strong case to stakeholders. EGYPT and GHANA suggested a focus on community engagement to support SLM in rural areas. PERU lauded CSO efforts for bringing legitimacy to SLM. GUINEA called for balancing degradation and reclamation.

ENDA called for sound data to build “quantitative appreciation” of CSOs’ work. CIASE (Argentina) underscored the enormous capacity present at the local level. AFAD (Mali) called for political will to support CSOs. Burger underscored that 70% of global food is produced by small holder farmers. Cautioning that communities that lose their contact to land also lose their culture, Oetlé urged a focus on land conservation before mitigating degradation. Closing the meeting, Kadioglu called for an “inclusive process” to support LDN.

CST

LINKING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE WITH DECISION-MAKING: Work programme of the SPI for the biennium 2016–2017: This discussion was aided by documents ICCD/COP(12)/CST/6 and ICCD/COP(12)/CST/INF.4. Hien Ngo, Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Secretariat, presented IPBES’ ongoing global land degradation and restoration (LDR) assessment, due to be completed in 2018. She stated that IPBES compiles and analyzes existing knowledge, and provides capacity building and policy support tools, based on requests from members and conventions. TURKEY sought clarification on how the LDR assessment fits into the SPI work programme, with IPBES responding that the request originated from a COP decision. MALI suggested a joint CBD and UNCCD validation process. The US asked about input on tools and approaches. Ngo responded that they will be selected by the experts.



CST Chair Safriel, in his role as SPI Co-Chair, presented the draft SPI work programme for the 2016-2018 biennium. He said the work programme focuses on addressing LDN, land degradation/SLM and climate change interlinkages, and lands that are already degraded, and that the SPI would also coordinate with IPBES, ITPS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Global Land Outlook.

The EU encouraged the SPI to forge further partnerships with other organizations working on LDN in relation to the SDGs. MOROCCO queried the role of the CST in discussions on the linkages between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC. Lauding the SPI's partnership with the Global Soils Partnership, TURKEY highlighted the importance of the coordination activities as they relate to soil services. IRAQ underscored the links between land, livestock, water and the prevention of degradation. EGYPT underlined the need to investigate ways to safeguard non-degraded lands, as well as encourage investment in land to prevent degradation. ETHIOPIA highlighted the need to consider livelihoods in land use planning activities. CHINA requested clarification on the repercussions of "negative land increases" in neighboring countries. SWITZERLAND suggested giving the SPI the mandate to further refine the LDN concept. NORWAY suggested the CST should inform national experts about the timing of the IPBES assessment to increase their participation and the relevance of the assessment to countries. JAPAN requested clarification on the scope and methodology for operationalizing LDN. NAMIBIA emphasized examining extreme events and maximizing land productivity. Noting the SPI aims to demonstrate science-based synergies between SLM and climate change, the PHILIPPINES queried whether the UNFCCC is also moving in this direction. ITALY suggested coordinating the SPI's work on extreme climate events with existing international programmes and organizations. INDONESIA highlighted the link between smoke and haze in land degradation in his country. FAO said its vision on sustainability includes improving efficiency of resource use, improving rural livelihoods and social well-being, enhancing resilience of people and ecosystems, and enhancing effective governance of natural and human systems. CSOs emphasized their role in gathering and disseminating knowledge on local and traditional practice, for example in the SKBP. Safriel responded, *inter alia*, that the LDN concept must encompass bringing productive land back into use, as well as restoring broader ecosystem services.

SKBP and promoting the analysis and dissemination of best practices: CST Chair Safriel invited the Secretariat to introduce documents ICCD/COP(12)/CST/7-ICCD/CRIC(14)/6 and ICCD/COP(12)/CST/INF.5. Hanspeter Liniger, WOCAT Secretariat, presented the WOCAT reporting system for SLM best practices, and encouraged an increase in the reporting rate among parties. Jeroen van Dalen, UNCCD Secretariat, presented a progress report on the SKBP, which he said is designed to be a "bridge to bridges" by facilitating access to best practice information in existing DLDD knowledge bases.

ECUADOR said it had submitted information via PRAIS and requested assistance in uploading this information via WOCAT. ARGENTINA asked for clarification on submitting national reports through WOCAT, and called for linking the SKBP to existing national knowledge platforms. SOUTH AFRICA requested information on: the selection criteria of the 15 countries chosen for the WOCAT pilot; the advantages of being a WOCAT consortium partner; and the quality control methods used by WOCAT and the SKBP.

FAO said the following countries are involved in the WOCAT pilot programme: Lesotho, Nigeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Bangladesh, China, Thailand, the Philippines, Argentina, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Bosnia

and Herzegovina. She called for additional funding in order to roll out the WOCAT programme in other countries. Tanzania called for capacity building for submitting reports on the new system.

Liniger reported that the PRAIS information is available and searchable via WOCAT and welcomed feedback on whether the material in the WOCAT database meets users' needs. The Secretariat said it channels information, but stated that reliability depends on the partners.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Roster of independent experts: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/13. The US suggested that experts be identified through alternative sources, such as Google Scholar, rather than having the Convention invest in an underutilized system. ARGENTINA expressed concern that the roster is nothing more than a list of experts who are not playing a role in the Convention. Morocco suggested that each country should select experts who will apply best practices. KENYA noted the need to generate interest in the Convention among roster experts. The Secretariat noted that the Convention itself requires the Secretariat to maintain the roster. SOUTH AFRICA urged all countries to update their lists of experts.

Programme of Work for CST 13: CST Chair Safriel invited comments on this issue and, hearing none, said a draft decision would be discussed in the CST Contact Group.

CONTACT GROUPS

Programme and Budget Contact Group: A lunchtime meeting discussed, among other issues, a proposal to raise the working capital reserve (WCR) from 8.3% to 22% of one year's budget. Participants requested the Secretariat to present scenarios for a WCR of 8.3%, 10% and 15%. On the issue of the reclassification of posts, the Secretariat explained that the Executive Secretary was exercising her "delegated authority" in the appointment of UNCCD staff and had fulfilled all due process requirements in reclassifying certain posts within the staffing table. The group also discussed the cost of the CRIC meeting in Bonn, Germany, with some requesting more information on the host country contribution and others pointing to the Bonn Fund as a means to cover the costs.

Joint CRIC/CST Contact Group: On Thursday evening, the contact group completed its review of the draft decision on improvement of knowledge dissemination, including traditional knowledge, best practices and success stories, and the work of the SKBP. The group then continued consideration of draft text on improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to COP. Co-Chair Mwendandu requested delegates to constitute an informal group to continue consideration of the CRIC decisions on Friday morning.

CST Contact Group: This group met late into the evening to review the remaining draft decisions, with a view to convening a final contact group session on Friday morning to finalize the text for adoption by the COP.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On day four of the COP, some commented that the energy, and full rooms, that they found at many side-events demonstrated a level of engagement that surpassed that in the main sessions, with delegates noting a "particularly low turnout" of parties at the plenary dialogue with CSOs. Some expected that discussions would heat up in the contact groups, despite limited exchanges of initial positions when agenda items were first introduced in the respective UNCCD bodies. With both the CRIC and the CST scheduled to conclude on Friday, participants used the evening reception hosted by the GEF as a means to reenergize themselves for late night contact group discussions under both Committees.