



## **UNCCD COP 12 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2015**

UNCCD COP 12 participants convened in a morning COW session, to consider the communication strategy, synergies among the Rio Conventions, accreditation of CSOs, and decision-making procedures, among other issues. Contact groups convened throughout the day to develop draft decisions on COP 12 agenda items.

### **COW**

COW Chair Thomas Tichelmann opened the fourth meeting of the COW, calling for continued flexibility and announcing that the contact groups would continue to meet during the High-Level Segment.

**POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNCCD: Implementation of the Comprehensive Communication Strategy and the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020):** The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/2, noting the increase in public interest in land degradation issues globally and the unprecedented opportunity to build on the momentum created by the adoption of the SDGs to structure the communication strategy around key themes.

**BRAZIL** said it should also be geared towards reaching the final users of knowledge, who may not be connected to the internet, such as farmers in arid lands and lands prone to desertification. **ARGENTINA** asked about the budget for the communication strategy and requested the Secretariat to provide a priority ranking of activities.

**EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL: Improving mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention:** The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/12 and highlighted progress on strengthening institutional frameworks, regional cooperation and regional implementation.

**TURKEY** informed delegates about an initiative to establish a regional coordinating unit (RCU) in Turkey for Annex IV countries, also to be coordinated with Annex V countries. The **AFRICAN GROUP** expressed concern at the move of the RCU for Africa to the Secretariat in Bonn, and recalled the call by the 15th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment to establish the RCU in a suitable host institution in Africa. CSOs called for more emphasis on the involvement of Indigenous Peoples' organizations when developing partnerships at regional and sub-regional levels.

**Leveraging of synergies among the Rio Conventions, including land-based adaptation to climate change and related advice from the SPI:** The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/17.

**ARGENTINA** supported work on common indicators for the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD and, supported by **EL SALVADOR**, called for a group composed of experts from the three Conventions to further consider these indicators. The CEE called for monitoring common indicators to address duplication of efforts and inefficient resource-use among the Rio Conventions. **INDIA** welcomed the work on synergies between the Conventions, but highlighted that if the common indicators are not taken up by all the Conventions, there would be an additional financial burden on Parties. He requested additional clarification on the definition of the three proposed indicators (trends in land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks). **NIGER** suggested the development of reference scenarios to monitor synergies at the national level, proposing that these scenarios be published to encourage sharing lessons learned and best practices. **JORDAN** suggested allocation of adequate financial resources and enhanced technical capacities to guarantee success in implementing cooperation among the Conventions.

**BRAZIL** underlined that synergies are key to avoiding duplication and expressed hesitancy at including references to the Convention addressing "security issues." **TURKEY** called for including a socio-economic indicator on human migration in the proposed bio-physical indicators. **EGYPT** noted the need to identify how to leverage synergies among indicators, and called for proposals on financing synergies. **MEXICO** drew attention to a proposal to include discussions on synergies at CBD COP 13, in Cancún, Mexico, in 2016. **EL SALVADOR** commended the efforts of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) between the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD Secretariats and called for the identification of common indicators to address issues such as mitigation, adaptation, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and SLM. The CBD SECRETARIAT highlighted the work of the JLG, noting that the use of common indicators represents a means to reduce the reporting burden on Parties, and stressing that these indicators are "low hanging fruit" for collaboration.

**IRAQ**, noting the severe social and economic impacts of terrorism and conflict in the region, echoed Turkey's call for specific efforts to develop socio-economic indicators. **AUSTRALIA** called for the Conventions to take account of ongoing programmes of relevance to the SDGs and pledged to continue supporting the Secretariat. **KUWAIT** stressed practical SLM synergies on the ground, such as expanding plant coverage. **ISRAEL** supported adopting the three land-based indicators



across the Conventions. CUBA expressed concern at reduced funding for regional meetings. CAMBODIA said it is important to demonstrate to the other Conventions that “with our success we can help solve their problems as well.” The AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION discussed the recent establishment of specialized technical committees to enhance cross-sector collaboration. INDONESIA highlighted a GEF-funded project on watershed development that aims to strengthen policy making, institutional development and awareness of global environmental affairs. ERITREA noted the need for synergies at all levels, including on planning and implementation.

**PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Revised procedures for CSO and private sector accreditation to the COP:** Introducing this item (ICCD/COP(12)/3), the Secretariat noted that CSO and private sector involvement is encouraged by a number of provisions in the Convention. He drew attention to the document’s annexes on: “The UNCCD and business: Partnership opportunities for SLM”; the CSO Selection Panel; and Financial requirements for the implementation of the activities to be funded from extrabudgetary resources.

Juan Luis Mérega, outgoing President of the CSO Panel, provided an update of activities since June 2015. He thanked the Governments of Switzerland and Turkey for their support, including funding the participation of 35 CSO representatives at COP 12, which he said was a substantial increase from COP 11. Among lessons learned, he noted challenges related to the varying capacities of CSOs and called for additional funding and capacity building, as well as increased participation of major international NGOs.

**PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Rule 47 of the rules of procedure; Procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation; and Annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures:** The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/14. He noted that the rules of procedure have been an agenda item for discussion since COP 2, but are yet to be resolved. Parties had provided submissions to the Secretariat, which suggested delaying any decision until a later session of the COP. On the procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation, he noted that the document reiterates the main points of decision 31/COP11 and provides comments to the recommendations of the open-ended *ad hoc* group of experts on the matter. On arbitration and conciliation procedures, he noted that decision 32/COP11 included proposed text as annexes on these matters, to which parties were invited to submit comments.

INDONESIA, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA and INDIA all stated a preference to take a consensus approach on rule 47, and to delay a decision until a future session of the COP. INDONESIA suggested that a two-thirds majority could be used only for procedural, but not substantive, matters. With regards to arbitration, INDONESIA could not support the optional rules given as submitted by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, as they are not members.

### CONTACT GROUPS

**Programme and Budget Contact Group:** Facilitated by A.K. Mehta (India), the group considered the draft decision on the multi-year work plans for the Convention and its subsidiary bodies, and conducted a first reading of the programme and budget draft decision. Addressing the results-based framework contained in the multi-year work plans, the group bracketed text on enabling policy environments with regard to resource mobilization through partnerships, in order to give some participants more time to consult. In the first reading of the draft decision on programme and budget for the biennium 2016-2017, participants discussed additional language on, *inter*

*alia*, arrangements for parties in arrears to complete payments within an agreed timeframe. Some supported a proposal for the Secretariat to send notification to these parties to encourage timely payment, with the group engaging in a lengthy discussion on the period that constitutes “being in arrears.” On a clause authorizing the Executive Secretary to establish additional lower-level positions on the approved staffing table within a budget of staff costs not exceeding €10,581,075, some called for bracketing the amount referenced until agreement on the budget is reached. They then debated a proposal to qualify the type of positions to be established as “temporary appointments” and authorizing the Executive Secretary to establish lower-level positions “in addition to” the approved staffing table. The text remained bracketed.

The group did not agree on a proposal to request the Secretariat to prepare a zero nominal growth budget for the biennium 2018-2019. Some participants called for disaggregation of appropriation lines to facilitate the consideration of the budget.

**CRIC Contact Group:** In the morning, delegates cleared up text on collaboration with the GEF, which, *inter alia*: welcomes increased resources for the land degradation focal area under GEF-6; invites donors to consider increased support to address country priorities, in particular for SDG target 15.3; invites the GEF to consider technical and financial support for voluntary national LDN target-setting under GEF-6; and calls for parties to advocate for a balanced allocation of funds among the Rio Conventions. The group did not agree on a call for the GEF to consider putting in place a multi-year funding programme, “in order to reverse the cost of land degradation which amounts to US\$66 billion annually.” This text also includes a request to the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM to mobilize additional financial resources “for its development and implementation.”

In the afternoon, the group considered the draft decision on financial flows, including a section on review of financial support for the implementation of the Convention. Delegates agreed to call on developed country parties to improve reporting on their financial support for the implementation of the Convention and made progress on paragraphs calling for developed country parties to facilitate access to appropriate technology and increase financial commitments for NAP and SLM implementation. The group agreed to draft new text referencing a CRIC 13 request to the Secretariat to conduct a financial needs assessment of affected country parties in implementing a future multi-year Strategy of the Convention, and to move it to the draft decision on post-2015 action programmes.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

As participants reminisced over numerous weekend technical and cultural trips that took them far from Ankara, they also remarked on the slow progress in Saturday’s CRIC contact group. With strict application of a “no more than two parallel contact groups” rule, there was increased jostling for time to meet, with the two COW groups convening over lunch. As delegates speculated on what it would take to conclude their negotiations in the coming days, flagging energy levels were also evident when no contact group took advantage of the opportunity to meet on Monday evening. With Tuesday morning blocked off for the opening of the High-Level Segment, the COP Bureau is already facing additional complications in scheduling meetings, which could result in late night sessions in the coming days.