



## UNCCD COP 12 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2015

Delegates convened in a morning meeting of the COW to consider and adopt three decisions. The COP Plenary met immediately following the COW session, and adopted the three COW decisions as well as three revised CST decisions. Contact and informal groups continued negotiating additional draft decisions throughout the day.

### COW

Opening the morning session, COW Chair Thomas Tichelmann thanked the two COW contact groups for making good progress and invited delegates to consider and adopt the three finalized draft decisions that had just been distributed.

Delegates adopted the draft decision on leveraging of synergies among the Rio Conventions and promoting partnerships with other international agencies and bodies (ICCD/COP(12)/L.1), without amendment. This decision, *inter alia*: welcomes initiatives undertaken by the three Rio Convention Secretariats and the GEF to develop common indicators; proposes the use of the three land-based progress indicators (on trends in land cover, land productivity and carbon stock above and below ground) for reporting under the Rio Conventions; requests the Secretariat to continue working with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to define indicators for SDG target 15.3; and requests the Secretariat and the GM to continue to fulfil their respective roles in strengthening partnerships to further enhance the implementation of the Convention.

Chair Tichelmann invited delegates to adopt the decision on addressing particular regional and national conditions (ICCD/COP(12)/L.2). In response to a request by JORDAN for clarification on preambular text highlighting that “a significant proportion of land degradation occurs beyond arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas,” the CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA and UKRAINE expressed support for this formulation, noting that its purpose is not to expand the scope of the Convention, but to ensure that it accommodates the specific contexts of all Regional Implementation Annexes. BRAZIL, supported by ARGENTINA, noted the text was “nothing more than a factual statement,” with the EU stressing that “every word, every comma has been thoroughly analyzed” in the contact group. Stressing that 80% of land degradation occurs in areas that fall outside the initial scope of the Convention, UKRAINE, supported by TURKEY, thanked parties for their consideration. The COW adopted the decision, which, among other provisions, recognizes that parties may use the

UNCCD to guide their policies relating to DLDD and voluntary targets when striving to achieve LDN at national and subnational levels, and invites the Secretariat, relevant Convention bodies and partners to provide assistance in that regard.

Referring to the decision on integration of the SDGs and targets into the implementation of the UNCCD and the IWG report on LDN (ICCD/COP(12)/L.4), BRAZIL noted the decision had achieved a “finely-tuned balance,” further noting that negotiations on this decision, as well as L.2, were among the most difficult issues on the COW’s agenda. He emphasized that while LDN can serve as a new tool, parties should not forget established DLDD approaches as they embark on a new path forward. Delegates adopted the decision, which, *inter alia*: welcomes the IWG report contained in ICCD/COP(12)/4; endorses the IWG science-based definition of LDN; decides that striving to achieve SDG target 15.3 is a strong vehicle for driving implementation of the Convention; and outlines specific actions to be undertaken by parties, the Secretariat, the GM and other stakeholders. Delegates adopted the draft decision.

Welcoming the adoption of the three decisions, Chair Tichelmann urged contact groups to demonstrate the same flexibility to ensure timely conclusion of the remaining draft texts.

### PLENARY

Sedat Kadioglu, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry for Forestry and Water Affairs, on behalf of COP 12 President Veysel Eroglu, Minister, Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, opened the morning session of the COP Plenary and invited delegates to consider a number of draft decisions for adoption.

Kadioglu invited comments on the draft decision on the outcomes of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.1/Rev.1), which seeks to improve the scientific-policy interface of the Convention through the SPI and with input from CSOs and other relevant bodies and initiatives.

BRAZIL stated support for the revised text, noting the importance of the decision and the deliberations it took to reach agreement. The decision was adopted without amendment.

The decision looks to strengthen the science-policy interface of the Convention through, *inter alia*, the engagement of the SPI with the IPCC and other relevant bodies and initiatives; parties’ use of policies and strategies that support both LDN and climate change adaptation; and greater input from CSO networks to support knowledge sharing on DLDD and SLM, including through the SKBP.

Kadioglu then invited comments on the draft decision on the improvement of knowledge dissemination, including traditional knowledge, best practices and success stories (ICCD/COP(12)/



CST/L3./Rev.1) which, *inter alia*, calls for: the further use and strengthening of the WOCAT reporting system; an enhanced “capacity-building and awareness-raising” thematic topic by the Secretariat through the Capacity Building Marketplace; and continued development of the SKBP.

No comments were made and the decision was adopted without amendment.

Kadioglu then invited comments on the draft decision on the work programme of the SPI (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.4/Rev.1). Among other items, the decision calls for the SPI to: continue its engagement with IPBES, especially on the Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment; encourage greater involvement from the roster of experts; and develop policy briefs, including policy-oriented options, on the topics covered in the work programme.

While supporting the new text and welcoming the LDN approach, BRAZIL emphasized that the original objectives of the Convention are still relevant and, noting the importance to the livelihoods of affected communities, he said attention should be equally given to mitigating drought and combatting desertification. TURKEY supported the SPI work programme and highlighted that the “user guide” deliverable would support bringing science and policy closer together. The decision was adopted without modification.

Kadioglu invited comments on the draft decision on leveraging synergies among the Rio Conventions and promoting partnerships with other international agencies and bodies (ICCD/COP(12)/L.1), which focuses on the harmonization of reporting and indicators as appropriate across the Rio Conventions and SDGs. No interventions were made and the decision was adopted without amendment.

Kadioglu invited comments on the draft decision on addressing particular regional and national conditions (ICCD/COP(12)/L.2), which calls for the Secretariat, other Convention bodies and bilateral and multilateral partners to assist parties in achieving LDN. BRAZIL supported the adoption of the text, noting the deliberations it took to reach agreement on the text. The decision was adopted without amendment.

Kadioglu invited comments on the draft decision on the integration of the SDGs and their targets into the implementation of the Convention and the IWG report on LDN (ICCD/COP(12)/L.4), which invites parties to formulate voluntary nationally-appropriate targets on LDN and to use indicators to track progress.

BRAZIL supported the adoption of the text, noting the novel approach of LDN and its importance in supporting the achievement of the objectives of the Convention. He called on developed countries to provide financial support to affected parties to achieve SDG target 15.3. The decision was adopted without amendment.

### CONTACT GROUP

**CRIC:** On Thursday morning, delegates resumed discussion of the draft decision on formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 agenda. Following information from the Secretariat that it was beyond the mandate of the CRIC to decide on the establishment of an IWG to consider follow up arrangements for the Strategy, delegates agreed to forward the negotiation texts relating to this matter to the COW contact group. The group considered remaining bracketed text, agreeing to, *inter alia*: update the title of the decision in line with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; ensure that the alignment process is in accordance with the Strategy and is achieved by 2018; request the UNCCD and GEF Secretariats to continue consultations on arrangements for the delivery of GEF-6 funding enabling

activities, with a view to securing support for the next reporting exercise, including in the area of progress reporting and national target-setting on LDN; and request parties at COP 13 to consider adding the first review of LDN voluntary targets and their implementation so far to the agenda of the intersessional meeting of CRIC/CST prior to COP 14.

In the afternoon, several parties reported that they were not ready to negotiate on the draft decision on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention, and requested clarification from the Secretariat on any specific mandate required of this COP. The Secretariat noted that the bulk of the text in the decision can be considered at the next COP, but requested guidance on items to be discussed at the CRIC intersessional session in 2016, recalling that a similar decision was adopted to guide the work of the special CRIC session tasked with considering reporting modalities for the Strategy. Delegates requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised draft decision, modeled on the COP 8 decision, for their consideration.

Early in the evening, the contact group reached agreement on the draft decision on assessment of the implementation of the Convention against the four operational objectives of the Strategy, and adjourned briefly, with a view to concluding consideration of the three remaining decisions on reshaping the CRIC, improving communication procedures, and financial flows, by Friday morning.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

On the penultimate day of COP 12, delegates met in contact groups and informal sessions throughout the day, following an efficient morning plenary that concluded early, just in case the negotiations would benefit from additional time. Despite the smooth adoption of the much-anticipated decisions on the science-based definition of LDN and actions parties should take with regard to LDN, as well as the response to the request by the Central and Eastern European countries for clarification on “the mandate and scope of the Convention,” some delegates hinted to a “growing sense of nervousness” regarding the slow progress in the CRIC and budget contact groups.

Using a football analogy, one participant exhorted CRIC delegates to accelerate their efforts, saying he felt his group was turning into the “Group of Death,” with 53 paragraphs to review and fewer than 24 hours to discuss them. The group seemed to heed the call as they raced through their remaining decisions, with a similar “ray of hope” to that which some said appeared in the budget contact group as it broke into informal consultations. Another participant indicated this group had moved into informal consultations one day earlier than usual, which some hoped could provide momentum on this and other negotiations.

With the clock ticking, it remained to be seen whether the COP would finalize consideration of all the agenda items, with some pointing out that contact groups were already considering postponing decision making on some topics to a later COP as an option alongside pursuing late-night debates.

**NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY & PRACTICE:** A knowledgebase of UN and intergovernmental activities addressing land-related issues: <http://nr.iisd.org/>

**ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:** The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of UNCCD COP 12 will be available on Tuesday, 27 October 2015, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/desert/cop12/>