

CSD-16 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 7 MAY 2008

On Wednesday, CSD-16 participants convened in parallel sessions to discuss agriculture and rural development, land, drought and desertification.

THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

CSD-16 Vice-Chair Ojdanic chaired the session. Sergio Cruz (UNIDO) emphasized research and development, South-South trade, and linking domestic and global food trade markets. Puneetha Palakurthi (Southern New Hampshire University) presented the role, characteristics and challenges of rural finance. Colien Hefferan (USDA) said knowledge for rural communities needs to be available and useful, and leadership training should begin at early stages of educational processes. Arne Cartridge (Yara International ASA) emphasized the need for multi-sectoral partnerships in Africa, which he said require the involvement of local institutions.

TANZANIA highlighted its renewed extension services through public-private partnerships. Claiming bioenergy contributes to sustainable development, ITALY called for lifecycle analyses and certification standards for biofuels. AUSTRALIA urged integrating climate adaptation responses in agriculture, supported more open trade policies, and highlighted its support to improve developing country sanitary and phytosanitary measures. SIDS noted that promises from the Mauritius Declaration remain unfulfilled. JAMAICA emphasized targeted efforts in key areas to increase productivity. Noting the current "food tsunami," JORDAN called for a halt in biofuel production. JAPAN announced a contribution of US\$ 100 million for food aid. CHINA appealed to developed countries to further open their markets for agricultural products. BELARUS stressed sharing resources equitably, lifting subsidies, and increasing investment in agriculture.

EU said it supports policies that enable developing countries to access international markets. US highlighted benefits of cooperative business organizations, and supported sustainable production and use of biofuels.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for relevant and appropriate youth empowering education. REPUBLIC OF KOREA highlighted the value of the rural elite and its two-step – centralized followed by decentralized – strategy in rural development. KAZAKHSTAN described market-oriented agricultural reforms that have made it the sixth largest grain producer. PAPUA NEW GUINEA said its revitalized agricultural sector came from a commodity price boom due to an improved international environment. COTE D'IVOIRE urged halting measures that led to the 1980s drop in agricultural production. NORWAY expressed interest in the CSD's proposals for its

assistance programmes and highlighted gender considerations in its aid-for-trade policy.

ALGERIA said its rural development strategy encourages investment, combats desertification and safeguards threatened areas. NIGERIA stressed micro-financing for rural areas. UNCCD noted the decline in rural investments, and said the Convention offers a tool for combating poverty and achieving the MDGs. NGOs highlighted the value of regenerative agriculture. MOROCCO favored enhanced international cooperation to address climate change. SOUTH AFRICA said an integrated approach to agricultural development is critical for its traditional communities. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO highlighted efforts to support women and youth involved with agriculture. FAO said it is analyzing the costs and benefits of biofuels, supporting scientific analysis of biotechnologies, and advising countries during the upcoming planting season.

ZAMBIA called for assistance for its rural development programmes. MEXICO highlighted basic services, housing, financing, technological and research investment. EU supported sustainable production and consumption of biofuels.

DROUGHT: Vice-Chair Carmon chaired the session and DSD Officer-in-Charge Abdalla presented the Secretary-General's report on drought (E/CN.17/2008/6). Anada Tiega (Secretary General, Ramsar Convention) explained that building houses on flood plains prevents aquifer recharge and leads to drought. Scott Christiansen (ICARDA) called for drought preparedness, early warning systems and safety nets. Enos Esikuri (World Bank) said the World Bank is moving beyond emergency response, to managing drought risk and reducing vulnerability.

Estanbacio Castro Diaz (International Indian Treaty Council) discussed the vulnerability of indigenous people to drought. PSIDS highlighted scarcity of water and drought preparedness, and urged assistance from development partners. US outlined drought initiatives, including the Famine Early Warning System Network. CANADA noted the need to explore complementary ways of dealing with drought. REPUBLIC OF KOREA explained developing countries need to build capacity in drought preparedness. INDIA said traditional technologies are being integrated into formal planning and policy processes in India. SOUTH AFRICA emphasized integrating programmes and harmonizing policies. CHILDREN AND YOUTH urged focusing on the root causes of drought. ZIMBABWE and NGOs stressed recognizing indigenous coping strategies. MOROCCO explained the country's structures and measures to mitigate drought. UNCCD underscored the need for demand-driven research and effective partnerships for sustainable investment.

EU called for a comprehensive drought response, including prevention and diffusion of technologies. G-77/CHINA emphasized UN/ISDR's role in drought response, and the Group, ARGENTINA and the SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL

COMMUNITY called for the development of early warning systems. RIO GROUP suggested measures to address drought, including early warning and building capacity of local communities, and technology access. ISRAEL reported on its critical water situation, and AUSTRALIA described the national effects of drought. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS spoke of the migration of agricultural workers. UN/ISDR recalled the Hyogo Framework for Action on building resilience. CZECH REPUBLIC stressed information sharing. CHINA described its national policies, and called for combining combating drought and poverty. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES discussed protecting nomadic pastoralists from becoming refugees. WMO described its involvement in a drought management centre in Central Asia. JORDAN called for increased cooperation for technology transfer. IUCN said wetlands and drylands need to be addressed together in an ecosystem approach.

LAND: Vice-Chair Tharyat chaired the discussion and the Secretariat introduced the Secretary General's report on land (E/CN.17/2008/5). Omara Amuko (International Union of Food Allied Workers Association) discussed livelihoods of agricultural wage workers. Jolyne Sanjak (Millennium Challenge Corporation) stressed governance and a learning approach to land tenure and land use planning. Erick Fernandes (World Bank) urged providing decision support systems and pro-poor information that integrates scenario models, cultural and traditional knowledge. Clarissa Augustinus (UN-HABITAT) drew attention to a new broader cadastral system under registration at the International Standards Organization. Michael Taylor (International Land Coalition) noted a correlation between the poor and land insecurity, and a "new land rush" from commercial interests.

G-77/CHINA highlighted the need for international cooperation on information and technology. EU supported an integrated approach to soil protection. AOSIS discussed innovative conservation programmes including the Micronesia Challenge. PSIDS explained that competing demands for land in SIDS are exacerbated by land leasing systems from absentee land owners.

SENEGAL and MALAYSIA emphasized good governance in land management. INDIA stressed decentralized land management. INDONESIA described its efforts in reducing land conversion and changing the farming culture of small farmers. Underscoring the importance of data bases in land management and their high costs, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, MALAYSIA and JAMAICA called for international assistance. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY emphasized integrated, balanced and holistic land management approaches and incentives encouraging ecosystem management by small farmers. WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS noted the difficulty of separating land from its inhabitants. ARGENTINA called for action on, among others, adverse climate change effects, application of ILO worker standards, and information and evaluation tools. THAILAND described various community land practices for long-term ecosystem conservation.

NORWAY said soil is a scarce and vulnerable resource. SWITZERLAND said more innovative tools are needed to take stock of soil. CHINA explained it is working to improve the quality of farmland. CHILDREN AND YOUTH called for education programmes on land. CZECH REPUBLIC discussed land consolidation programmes. ISRAEL described its efforts to conserve land through high density housing schemes. UNCCD said UN agencies dealing with aspects of land could forge a land coalition. US noted the importance of land for food, income generation and cultural identity. EGYPT noted the need to consolidate land cooperation frameworks.

DESERTIFICATION: Vice-Chair Carmon chaired the session and Officer-in-Charge Abdalla presented the Secretary-General's report on desertification (E/CN.17/2008/7). Uriel Safriel (Israel's UNCCD focal point) noted the lack of an agreed definition of desertification, and argued it is a subset of land degradation in areas with a persistent reduction of biological

productivity. Jeff Herrick (USDA) described tools that prioritize remediation projects based on what is possible and realistic. Sanjay Kumar (India) drew attention to, among others, the importance of local level governance and livelihood orientations. Nancy Kgengwenyane (Botswana) emphasized the importance of a holistic discussion of agricultural practices, robust institutional structures, and the development of appropriate, accessible technology.

G-77/CHINA said the UNCCD is a platform for addressing climate change and biodiversity, and called for its full implementation, and strengthening the GEF focal area in the next replenishment. EU noted that the linkage between desertification and climate change is a fundamental finding of the IPCC, and said IPCC assessments should include climate change impacts on drylands. RIO GROUP emphasized early warning and capacity building for communities. AFRICAN GROUP stressed desertification's link with climate change, called for synergy among the Rio conventions, and urged additional funding.

ICELAND said the Global Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change it organized recommended establishing an independent panel of experts for UNCCD. AUSTRALIA and NGOs supported the Ten-Year Strategic Plan and its implementation. US outlined the community-based natural resources management model. CHILDREN AND YOUTH said there is no future for youth if desertification is not reversed. EGYPT called on donors to facilitate technology transfer. SWITZERLAND said a global partnership to combat desertification is urgently required. CHINA outlined its reform in the collective ownership of forests, which benefits farmers and contributes to ecological conservation.

ISRAEL called for renewed commitment to a synergistic implementation of the Rio conventions. BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY highlighted the potential of drought-tolerant crops, plant breeding, and the identification of crops suitable for reclamation projects in drylands. GUATEMALA called attention to an upcoming summit of Latin American and Caribbean Presidents to discuss climate change adaptation.

SOUTH AFRICA expressed concern about limited resources for land management programmes. INDIA said technology and finance need to reach the local level. ZIMBABWE noted the need for integrated water resource management programmes. ARGENTINA highlighted the need to take action under the UNCCD, on mitigation and adaptation, and within the WTO to reduce or eliminate economic barriers. COTE D'IVOIRE highlighted training farmers in cultural practices compatible with sustainable agriculture.

WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS evoked the right of workers "not to migrate." CANADA urged elevating UNCCD's profile. NORWAY spoke of the reciprocal impacts of climate change and desertification. FRANCE urged synergy and warned of desertification's threat to international security. VENEZUELA suggested that access to water is a human right, and urged ODA increases. UNCCD said the Convention offers a long-term solution for increased food production by expanding arable land.

IN THE CORRIDORS

In the view of several participants, the afternoon debate on desertification was focused and rich in innovative ideas and incisive analysis, especially of the linkage with climate change. In the corridors, however, voices of caution were heard, mainly regarding feeble implementation. The argument runs that short-changing the UNCCD, unlike its sister Rio conventions, is making the prospect of its full implementation unlikely, and with it, poverty reduction. And, without adequate resources for the Ten-Year Strategic Plan, all discussions amount to "empty talk." As a delegate noted, the persistent disconnect between our deepened understanding of desertification with its many ramifications and the paucity of funding is hard to explain, given the specter of further land degradation, spiraling food prices and environmental migration.