

UN/CCD

Desertification: Progress on Institutional Arrangements

Delegates to the Second Conference of the Parties (COP-2) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), met in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 November–11 December 1998.

The Convention was adopted on 17 June 1994, and was opened for signature in October 1994 in Paris. Three months after the receipt of its fiftieth ratification, the Convention entered into force on 26 December 1996. (Environmental Policy & Law, has reported in several issues on the development of the Convention. For information on COP-1. See Volume 27 (1997) at page 461.)

Participants were welcomed to COP-2 by *Abdou Diouf*, President of Senegal. He suggested in his opening speech that the Conference, in moving toward its operational phase, consider how to coordinate activities under the CBD, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC); and arrive at the precise definition of the role and operational procedures of the Global Mechanism.

Souty Touré, Senegal's Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature, was elected as Conference President.

Nitin Desai, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, highlighted three ways in which the CCD exemplifies and follows-up on Rio: It shows how environmental and development objectives can be served in the same framework; it reflects the Rio partnership between developed and developing countries; and it recognises the interaction between sectoral and among cross-sectoral themes.

The documents prepared for the Meeting were introduced by the CCD Executive Secretary, *Hama Arba Diallo*. He underlined the importance of focal points and national coordinating bodies, and noted that recent reports had indicated that the weakness of focal points is a reason for delay in implementation. He stressed that the Secretariat would continue to work with Parties during the implementation process.

During the two weeks of the Conference, delegates met in Plenary, the Committee of the Whole (COW) and its three informal negotiating groups and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), to discuss the COP's agenda items and possible draft decisions.

On 7 December 1998, parliamentarians from 21 countries convened an interparliamentary Round Table on the contribution they can make to the implementation of the Convention. The following day, a Special Segment was held, during which ministers, high-level government officials and representatives from intergov-

ernmental organisations addressed the ways and means to implement the Convention.

Statements in Plenary

Indonesia, on behalf of the G-77/China, called for the elaboration of national, regional and subregional programmes and stressed the need to establish and operate regional coordinating units as soon as possible to facilitate implementation. The delegate expressed concern over the lack of enthusiasm of some partners and called on them to provide financial and institutional assistance. He regretted that the Global Mechanism did not commence operations on 1 January 1998, as decided at COP-1.

The G-77/China hoped that COP-2 would take decisive action in the establishment of a committee to review the implementation of the Convention and its institutional arrangements.

Austria, on behalf of the EU, underlined the importance of coordination between donors and affected countries and said a coordination tool that reflects the intentions of all partners will reduce duplication of work and assure a precise definition of respective tasks. He noted the important relationship and benefits of coordinating efforts between desertification, water, climate change and biodiversity. The delegate also called for a further elaboration of the Secretariat's role and a clear division of labour between the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat.

Canada, speaking for JUSCANZ, promised its support and co-operation at COP-2. Ecuador, on behalf of GRULAC, highlighted its Regional Action Programme, which has led to the establishment of a regional coordinating unit and a regional information network. The delegate expressed concern over the imbalance in budget distribution among the regions and representation on the Secretariat.

Massa Lo (ENDA), on behalf of the NGO community, said the scheduled dialogues between NGOs and the COP indicate Parties' commitment to partnership and a new challenge for NGOs. He also noted his concern with the delay in operating the Global Mechanism, and asked participants to consider opportunities presented by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), particularly since the Global Mechanism is not fully operational.

In other Plenary statements, Argentina emphasised the need for a strong and efficient Secretariat with clear functions. The Russian Federation called for progress on the definition of a fifth regional implementation annex. Syria highlighted activities undertaken nationally and regionally to combat desertification. Japan called on the US and other non-Parties to conclude the process of accession to Party status.

Special Segment

Delegates considered a wide range of issues, focusing on issues related to accession to the CCD; institutional issues; international cooperation and developed country action; and national activities under their National Action Plans (NAPs) and priority issues.

The Russian Federation and several Eastern and Central European countries supported a fifth implementation annex to the CCD, which they believed would accelerate some countries' accession to the Convention.

The G-77/China and others, underlined the necessity for the Global Mechanism's operationalisation in 1999 and called for resources to achieve this.

Mauritania said the CCD Secretariat must be given the freedom to implement its responsibilities.

Germany stated that it had done its share to ensure the timely operation of the Permanent Secretariat in January 1999.

Burkina Faso and others supported establishing a committee to review implementation.

The EU said it would continue to be a major source of financing for the Convention, and will seek to make resource use more efficient and help the Global Mechanism mobilise resources.

Several international organisations discussed ways through which they could facilitate implementation. The GEF said its Council had stipulated that its operational strategy should include land degradation as an integral part of its activities.

Committee of the Whole

The Committee's agenda included the outstanding rules of procedure, designation of a Permanent Secretariat, programme and budget, review of implementation of budget, report of the Global Mechanism, promotion and strengthening of relationships with other conventions, and annexes on arbitration and conciliation procedures.

Outstanding Rules of Procedure

COP-1 adopted the rules of procedure subject to bracketed text in Rules 22 (1), 31 (composition of the Bureau) and 47(1) (majority required absent consensus).

Discussions on these outstanding Rules resulted in a resolution regarding the composition of the Bureau. On the issue of majority voting, which has been a stumbling block for other conventions, particularly the FCCC, the COP transmitted revised bracketed language to COP-3 for further consultation.

Following informal discussions, the COP adopted text for Rules 22 (1) and 31. In both Rules, after "due regard shall be paid to the need to ensure equitable geographic distribution and adequate representation of affected country Parties, particularly in Africa," the COP agreed to insert "while not neglecting affected country Parties in other Regions." With regard to Rule 47(1), the COP added "a simple majority vote" in brackets to the bracketed option "two-thirds majority vote."

The Meeting retained intact a bracketed exception for decisions pertaining to Articles 21 and 22(2)(g) (finan-

cial mechanisms and programme and budget), which would be taken by consensus only.

Permanent Secretariat

Executive Secretary Diallo noted that in December 1997, the UN General Assembly approved the institutional linkage between the CCD Secretariat and the United Nations.

The Executive Secretary and Germany highlighted that the headquarters agreement signed with the German Government on 18 August 1998, has identical terms to that of the FCCC Secretariat. Ratification by the German Parliament should take place in early 1999, and the necessary minimum conditions for adoption by the COP had been achieved.

Germany stated that it had forwarded DM 2 million to the Secretariat as part of the agreement and promised to pay its contribution to the Secretariat's core budget in January 1999.

The COP adopted the headquarters agreement of the Permanent Secretariat, which approves the agreement subject to its ratification by Germany.

Programme and Budget

Following consultations in the contact group, delegates reached agreement on adjustments to the Convention budget and programme for 1999.

Among its provisions are the approval of the revised core budget for 1999, amounting to US \$6.1 million; approval of the creation of a new trust fund for the special annual contribution from the German Government; a request to the Executive Secretary to submit at COP-3 a proposed programme budget for 2000/2001; and adoption of an indicative scale of contributions by Parties to the general fund of the Convention.

The Conference adopted the text as well as the Secretariat's notes on the review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds in 1998.

Medium-Term Strategy

The Strategy was the Secretariat's proactive attempt to synergize conventions.

The G-77/China supported the Strategy and proposals for future action and said the document should be used as the basis for future discussion. However, the EU and JUSCANZ did not support the document as a basis for further discussion, stating that it suggested an operational role for the Secretariat. They stressed that the Secretariat is intended to play a facilitating and coordinating role for Parties, and should not conflict with the roles of the Global Mechanism, CST and specialised agencies involved in combating desertification.

The G-77/China stressed that the Secretariat's mandate should not be limited solely to the provisions of Article 23 and that the EU and JUSCANZ positions could be interpreted as a non-objective and restrictive interpretation of the Secretariat's strategy.

Several delegates expressed concern that these were attempts to reduce the Secretariat to its lowest common

denominator, which would tend to confirm that the CCD was a "poor relation" of the other Rio Conventions.

The NGO community stressed that the Secretariat has a role to play in ensuring that NGOs and civil society are involved in implementation of the Convention at all levels, which requires the Secretariat to have the necessary means for operating a strong NGO liaison office to facilitate activities at all levels.

Following discussions in the non-group on implementation, the COW drafted a decision requesting the Executive Secretary to elaborate a new document and inviting Parties to make submissions on the issue by 30 April 1999.

Programme of Work at COP-3 and COP-4

The decision on the programme of work indicates that COP-3 will consider, *inter alia*, implementation reports from Africa; the Global Mechanism modalities and activities; the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other conventions; procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation; and arbitration and conciliation procedures.

COP-4 will review the implementation reports and Regional Action Programmes (RAPs) and Subregional Action Programmes (SRAPs) of affected countries other than in Africa.

Review of Implementation and Institutional Arrangements

The US said that any review of implementation and determination of the need for additional institutional structures internal to the Convention must include a review of activities of all existing institutions internal and external to the Convention.

Several countries stressed the importance of elaborating a fifth regional implementation annex to the Convention and said informal consultations will be finalised once the countries concerned accede to Party status.

These issues were considered further in the relevant non-groups. Regional and interest groups tabled draft texts and the Committee produced decisions on: regional implementation annexes and interregional programmes and platforms of cooperation; regional cooperation between countries of Eastern and Central Europe; procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation; and review of implementation of the Convention.

During the adoption in the Plenary, the EU delegate said she appreciated the efforts undertaken by the Parties to the regional annexes to intensify their cooperation in implementing the Convention. However, she wished to have the report of the Meeting reflect the EU's view that, while the COP had taken useful further steps to strengthen regional cooperation, the facilitating role of the Executive Secretary should not lead to the creation of new institutional structures, highlighting the regional coordinating units.

The G-77/China also wished to have the report reflect that they supported the Secretariat's initiatives to facilitate implementation of the regional annexes and regional co-operation.

GRULAC requested the Secretariat to redouble and strengthen its activities in support of national, regional and subregional activities in all regions and that more resources be allocated in a balanced manner for all regions to combat desertification.

Global Mechanism

Discussion on this issue focused on reports from the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism, *Per Rydén*, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), as well as the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the COP and IFAD.

Per Rydén said he had grouped the GM's tasks into eight operational activities, including partnership building, channelling and matchmaking, developing a database, identifying innovative techniques, and marketing and communicating the Global Mechanism as the framework for addressing land degradation issues. He added that it would take time before the Global Mechanism has an impact, given its limited resources.

Speaking on behalf of IFAD, Bahman Mansuri stressed the Fund's continued support to the CCD and commitment, as the housing institution of the Global Mechanism, to make the GM operations effective. He reported on the establishment of a Facilitation Committee, which is a collaborative arrangement between IFAD, UNDP and the World Bank and has now expanded to include the CCD Secretariat, the GEF and other regional banks.

Decisions

The COP adopted two decisions. The decision on the *review of the Global Mechanism* notes with concern that it did not start operating on 1 January 1998; and *inter alia*, requests the Global Mechanism to establish a consultative and collaborative process with NGOs as well as with the private sector; and co-operation between the Global Mechanism and the Convention Secretariat to avoid duplication and enhance the effectiveness of CCD implementation.

The non-group on legal issues agreed to text that deferred the decision on the MOU between the CCD, COP and IFAD to COP-3.

During the closing Plenary, Canada, on behalf of the OECD group of countries, explained that whereas his group was pleased with the decision on the MOU, they were disappointed by the inability to adopt the MOU between the COP and IFAD.

The decision on the *MOU* between the CCD, COP and IFAD regarding *the modalities and administrative operations of the Global Mechanism*, decides to transmit to COP-3 the draft decision submitted by the G-77/China which supports the draft MOU, and calls on those to whom the draft MOU is addressed to act, pending its entry into operation, "as if it were already there."

Strengthening of Relations with Other Relevant Conventions

The decision adopted by the Conference requests the Secretariat to implement document COP(2)/7 (collabora-

Clean living

Effects of improved water and sanitation on sickness

	Number affected by illness m	Median reduction attributable to improvement %
Diarrhoea	900*	22
Roundworm	900	28
Schistosomiasis	200	73
Guinea worm	4	76

Source: World Bank

*Episodes per years

Courtesy: *The Economist*

tion with other conventions), in consultation with other relevant secretariats, and to develop an MOU to define such collaboration and cooperation.

Annexes on Arbitration and Conciliation Procedures

The Secretariat noted that the adoption of annexes would require an amendment to the Convention, as outlined in CCD Article 30.

Delegates agreed that, compared with the FCCC, which has recently decided to establish a multilateral consultative process, the CCD is a young Convention and the development of such a process would require further discussion.

Concerning an annex for arbitration and conciliation procedures, debate centred on the G-77/China's preference to create an *ad hoc* experts group to discuss the issue and refer it to COP-3, as opposed to the EU/JUSCANZ preference for a Secretariat compilation of submissions for COP-3, taking into account other conventions' experiences.

The Conference decision agrees to revisit the issue at COP-3, in light of the progress of negotiations on the same issue in other relevant environmental conventions, and to consider the establishment of an open-ended *ad hoc* group to examine and make recommendations on the issue, taking into account the document prepared by the Secretariat.

Other Matters

In addition to its agenda items, the COP considered other issues, raised by delegates.

The COP unanimously adopted a resolution expressing solidarity with Central America over the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch.

It also adopted two decisions: 1) As an annex to the COP-2 report, the Report on the Round Table of Parliamentarians, which includes the Declaration by Members of Parliaments regarding the process of implementation of the CCD. 2) A decision on administrative and support arrangements for the Secretariat, including interim arrangements. The decision calls on the UN General Assembly to finance from the UN regular programme budget the conference servicing costs arising from sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies for the period of their institutional linkage.

The US, in anticipation of becoming an active member of the CCD, said that, as a matter of principle, such costs should not be borne by the UN regular budget but solely by Parties to the CCD on a voluntary basis.

Dialogue with NGOs

Two Committee of the Whole sessions were devoted to dialogues with NGOs. The first session focused on issues related to traditional knowledge, and the second focused on the process of developing National Action Plans (NAPs).

Four NGO recommendations were presented: Awareness-raising workshops and pilot projects at the local level; a special NGO dialogue session at CST-3; political will and support to integrate local communities and women with the NAP process; and convening an NGO preparatory meeting before COP-3.

Committee on Science and Technology

Mohammad Reza Jabbari (Iran) served as Chair of the CST.

The Committee developed draft decisions on the roster of experts, survey and evaluation of existing networks, benchmarks and indicators, bodies performing work similar to the CST, traditional knowledge, and the CST-3 programme of work.

Roster of Experts

The decision invites Parties to supplement their submissions for the roster to ensure that under-represented areas are addressed, in particular in terms of gender equity, better representation or relevant disciplines, and increasing representation of experts from NGOs and IOs.

Survey and Evaluation

As requested by COP-1, the CST is establishing agreements with other consortium members to conduct the survey of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies.

Delegates adopted the CST Chair's draft decision on this issue, requesting UNEP, *inter alia*, to expedite the survey and evaluation in conformity with its COP-1 mandate and to submit a report to COP-3.

Benchmarks and Indicators

Delegates heard the report of the *ad hoc* panel on benchmarks and indicators, which was established at COP-1.

Many participants proposed: testing or implementing the methodology for impact indicators; noting the importance of financial assistance and capacity building to do so; and/or to discuss their experience testing them.

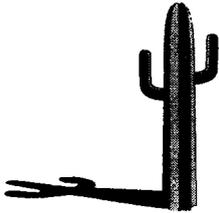
The decision adopted contains several comments on the report of the *ad hoc* panel, including the need for a harmonised approach with other conventions and relevant organisations and suggesting that the CST focus on programmes that build on national and/or local capacities to develop and use indicators. ➤

Bodies Performing Work Similar to the CST

The decision adopted invites governments to update the information contained in the Secretariat report on this subject (ICCD/COP(2)/CST/4).

Traditional Knowledge

Participants in the discussion pointed out the prominence of traditional knowledge in the planning and implementation of NAPs, the need for synergy between



local knowledge systems and modern science, and for partnerships between scientists and local experts.

The Secretariat highlighted its ongoing compilation of traditional knowledge in certain sub-regions, which will describe the techniques and note the extent to which they are transferable.

Possible threats to traditional knowledge were noted, including modern technology, population growth, marginalization of women, poverty, bio-invasions and climate change, and economic change or pressures.

The discussion ended with consideration of whether to create an *ad hoc* group and what its composition and mandate should be. Several G-77/China countries supported a panel to carry forward projects identified during the discussion. Several EU countries, as well as Japan, the US, and others, did not believe an *ad hoc* panel under the CST was the best place to accomplish the work and questioned whether all of the work identified was necessary.

After renewed discussion, the Chair concluded that a significant number of CST members supported establishing a panel and asked delegates to discuss its terms of reference. Following informal consultations, delegates agreed that the panel would draw on the synthesis report being compiled by the Secretariat and identify and report to CST-3 successful experiences and conclusions relating, *inter alia*, to threats and other constraints confronting such traditional knowledge and practices; and strategies for integrating traditional knowledge and local knowledge with modern knowledge based on specific case histories.

Future Work Programme of the CST

Based on the discussions held, the Chair presented delegates with a draft decision identifying the priority issue. The Chair proposed that CST-3 consider early warning systems. Several delegates, including the WMO, the UK, the G-77/China, Malawi and Sudan, supported the proposal. Brazil, the UK, Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands noted the importance of soil and water management.

The Chair proposed indicating that early-warning systems "in its broadest sense" be considered by CST-3. Several proposals for amendments were made to the draft. The final decision decides that CST-3 address "early-warning systems in its broadest sense" as the priority issue.

Interparliamentary Round Table

At the invitation of the CCD Secretariat and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, representatives discussed the process of and the contribution they could make to the Convention's implementation.

In the Dakar Declaration, the parliamentarians affirmed their commitment to contribute fully to the implementation of the CCD by, among other actions, supporting legislation concerning the fight against desertification; and subscribing to the promotion of policies and the strengthening of institutional frameworks for the favourable development of cooperation among affected countries.

Closing Plenary

The Plenary convened to adopt draft decisions submitted by the COW and the CST (see above). Some delegates made comments during the adoption of specific decisions.

The COP President gave a summary of the Special Segment in which he highlighted speakers' reports on contributions their country or organisation can make and is making to implement the Convention.

COP-2 Rapporteur *Samvel Baloyan* (Armenia) presented the report of the session, which was adopted by delegates.

Indonesia, on behalf of the G-77/China, emphasised the partnership that both his group and its partners enjoyed during the session and called for international cooperation on financial support and technology transfer.

Austria, on behalf of the EU, said that the solution on budgetary matter leaves his group optimistic for the future. The delegate expressed regret that a decision was not reached on the decision on convention and NAP cooperation. He said the EU countries remain committed to facilitating action through their development agencies in dialogue with affected countries, and called for this issue to be treated at COP-3.

Armenia, on behalf of the Eastern European countries, thanked all regional groups for supporting the launching of a new regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern European countries.

Canada, on behalf of JUSCANZ, said his group hopes to continue the discussion on the medium-term strategy and implementation of NAPs, keeping a focus on people in the field.

Iran, on behalf of the Asian Group, thanked the Government and people of Senegal for their hospitality.

COP-3 is scheduled to be held in Recife, Brazil, from 15–26 November 1999. (MJ) □