

SUMMARY OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 10-21 OCTOBER 2011

The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 10) convened from 10-21 October 2011, in Changwon City, Gyeongnam Province, Republic of Korea. The tenth meetings of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 10) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 10) convened in parallel to the COP. Approximately 6,300 participants registered for the COP, CST, CRIC and a number of associated events during the two-week meeting. By the close of COP 10, delegates in these three bodies had negotiated and adopted 40 decisions.

In addition to the COP, CRIC and CST, two half-day open dialogues with civil society organizations (CSOs) took place on 14 and 19 October, and a special segment, consisting of roundtable discussions among Ministers and other officials, took place from 17-18 October. At the conclusion of this segment, the Government of the Republic of Korea presented, and COP 10 delegates took note of, the “Changwon Initiative,” which identified actions the Republic of Korea would take to implement COP 10 decisions. In addition, an interactive dialogue session with Members of Parliament took place from 13-14 October, a Sustainable Land Management Business Forum convened from 17-18 October, the Rio Conventions Pavilion convened discussions to consider linkages with biodiversity and climate change topics, and a full schedule of side events took place.

UNCCD COP 10 delegates took a number of critical decisions for the implementation of the Convention and contribution to global efforts to address issues related to desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). Through the decisions developed in the CST, two *ad hoc* working groups were established: one to continue the iterative participatory process on impact-indicator refinement and monitoring and assessment of impacts; and one to further discuss options for the provision

of scientific advice to the UNCCD. The COP also called for a multi-stakeholder partnership model for launching a fellowship programme and identified a process for its development.

Through the decisions recommended by the CRIC, delegates: approved the strategic orientation of the Convention’s institutions and subsidiary bodies as contained in the workplans adopted at COP 10; adopted four operational objectives to assess the implementation of the Convention against performance indicators; and approved an iterative process on reporting procedures and the refinement of methodologies for the review and compilation of best practices, including by CSOs. The COP also adopted decisions on collaboration with the GEF and promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations.

Among the decisions discussed under the aegis of the Committee of the Whole (COW), the COP took a decision on a long-standing question about the governance structure for the Global Mechanism (GM), by which parties agreed that the accountability and legal representation of the GM shall be transferred from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to the UNCCD Secretariat. A decision

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related to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) requests the UNCCD Executive Secretary to actively prepare for and participate in the UNCSD. And the budget decision holds the Secretariat budget close to its existing level, at €16 million. COP 10 delegates expressed their hope that the institutional dilemmas faced by the Convention might have been overcome, and that their decisions had set in place a structure that could begin to deliver concrete results.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNCCD

The UNCCD is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation in the drylands. The UNCCD was adopted on 17 June 1994, and entered into force on 26 December 1996. Currently, it has 194 parties. The UNCCD recognizes the physical, biological and socioeconomic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer so that it is demand-driven, and the involvement of local communities in combating desertification and land degradation. The core of the UNCCD is the development of national, subregional and regional action programmes by national governments, in cooperation with UN agencies, donors, local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION: In 1992, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), as requested by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, adopted resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD). The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994 and drafted the UNCCD and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. A fifth annex, for Central and Eastern Europe, was adopted during COP 4 in December 2000. Pending the UNCCD's entry into force, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports on urgent action for Africa and interim measures in other regions, and to prepare for COP 1.

COPs 1-9: The first COP met in Rome, Italy, from 29 September-10 October 1997, during which delegates, *inter alia*, selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the UNCCD's Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development as the organization to administer the Convention's Global Mechanism (GM).

COP 2, which met in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 November-11 December 1998, invited Central and Eastern European countries to submit to COP 3 a draft regional implementation annex. Parties met for COP 3 in Recife, Brazil, from 15-26 November 1999, and approved a long-negotiated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the GM, among other decisions. COP 3 also decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes and to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the UNCCD, among other decisions.

COP 4 convened from 11-22 December 2000, in Bonn, Germany, during which delegates, *inter alia*, adopted the fifth regional Annex for Central and Eastern Europe, began the work of the *ad hoc* working group to review UNCCD implementation, initiated the consideration of modalities for the establishment of the CRIC, and adopted a decision on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support for UNCCD implementation.

COP 5 met from 1-13 October 2001, in Geneva, Switzerland, during which delegates, *inter alia*, established the CRIC and supported a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

COP 6 met from 25 August - 6 September 2003, in Havana, Cuba. Delegates, *inter alia*, designated the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, decided that a comprehensive review of the Secretariat's activities would be undertaken by the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and requested the Secretariat to facilitate a costed feasibility study on all aspects of regional coordination.

COP 7 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17-28 October 2005. Among their decisions, delegates reviewed the implementation of the Convention, developed an MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF, and reviewed the recommendations in the report of the JIU assessment of the Secretariat's activities. Discussion on regional coordination units ended without the adoption of a decision, and an Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group was established to review the JIU report and to develop a draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

COP 8 convened in Madrid, Spain, from 3-14 September 2007, and, *inter alia*, adopted a decision on the ten-year strategic plan (the Strategy). Delegates also requested the JIU to conduct an assessment of the GM for presentation to COP 9. COP 8 delegates did not reach agreement on the programme and budget, however, and an Extraordinary Session of the COP convened at UN Headquarters in New York on 26 November 2007 to conclude this item.

COP 9 convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 21 September - 2 October 2009. Delegates focused on a number of items that were called for by the Strategy and adopted 36 decisions, which addressed topics including: four-year work plans and two-year work programmes of the CRIC, CST, GM and the Secretariat; the JIU assessment of the GM; the terms of reference of the CRIC; arrangements for regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs); the communication strategy; and the programme and budget.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CST): The CST has convened parallel meetings to each COP, as specified in the Convention. At CST 1's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the continuation of the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators, and decided that CST 2 should consider linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. CST 3 recommended that the COP appoint *ad hoc* panels on traditional knowledge and on early warning systems. CST 4 submitted proposals to improve the CST's work, and CST 5 adopted modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, namely through the creation of a Group of Experts. CST 6 continued discussions on improving