Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

UNCCD COP 13 HIGHLIGHTS
THURSDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2017

On Thursday, 14 September, UNCCD COP 13 delegates convened in a morning plenary of the COP and adopted decisions on credentials of delegations and the reports of the Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

The Committee of the Whole (COW) contact groups on budget and on other matters met throughout the day and into the evening to consider draft decisions.

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Credentials of delegations: Chair Jia Xiaoxia, State Forestry Administration, China, representing COP 13 President, opened the session and invited the Conference to consider the draft COP decision on credentials of delegations (ICCD/COP(13)/L.3). Delegates adopted the decision without amendment.

LINKING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE WITH DECISION-MAKING: Review of the report of the CST: Chair Hamid Čustovič provided a brief overview of the work of the Committee, noting that it had, *inter alia*, explored avenues for enhanced scientific collaboration and synergies among the scientific bodies of the Rio Conventions and other relevant international platforms. He further reported that the Committee had welcomed the positive assessment of the work of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), agreed to extend its mandate until the end of COP 16, and approved the SPI's programme of work for 2018-2019 biennium.

Čustovič informed the COP that parties had proposed some amendments to two draft decisions (ICCD/COP(13)/L.1 and L.2) which would be updated accordingly. He invited parties to adopt the six draft decisions forwarded by the Committee, on: 'Follow-up on the work programme of the Science-Policy Interface'(SPI) for the biennium 2016–2017' (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.1); 'Cooperation with other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies' (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.2); 'Improving the efficiency of the SPI' (ICCD/COP(13)/CAT/L.3); 'Work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2018–2019' (ICCD/COP(13)/L.4); 'Promoting the analysis, dissemination and accessibility of best practices and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub' (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.5); and 'Programme of work for CST 14' (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.6). The COP adopted the six decisions.

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL: Review of the Report of the CRIC: Chair Jia Xiaoxia invited the CRIC Chair to present the report on the CRIC.

CRIC Chair Aliyu Bananda stated that the Committee completed its work on Wednesday 13 September, which included providing guidance on the reporting process beginning in November 2017, and adopting a reporting frequency of two years. He reiterated that six draft decisions had been approved by the Committee, taking note of parties' comments, particularly regarding the translation of the texts to Arabic, noting that the Secretariat would ensure the consistency in language. He invited parties to adopt the six draft decisions prepared by the Committee, on: 'Mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention' (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.1); 'Development and implementation of strategies through national action programmes to achieve the objectives of the Convention in light of target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.2); 'Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP' (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.3); 'Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF)' (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.4); the 'Date and venue of CRIC 17' (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.5); and 'Programme of work for CRIC 17' (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.6). The COP adopted the six draft proposals by acclamation.

On procedural matters, Chair Bananda announced Teofilus Nghitila (Namibia) as the Vice-Chair nominated to the CRIC.

CONTACT GROUPS

COW CONTACT GROUP ON OTHER MATTERS: The group met throughout the day, finalizing work on three draft decisions: Terms of Reference for the CRIC; the future Strategic Framework; and policy advocacy on drought. With the COW closing plenary postponed to Friday morning, the group worked through the evening, aiming to finalize work on the remaining six decisions on: policy advocacy on sand and dust storms; gender advocacy framework; CSO engagement; private sector participation; migration; and synergies with other Conventions.

COW CONTACT GROUP ON BUDGET: The group met throughout the day and in the evening.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Thursday morning presented an overcast sky, somewhat reflecting the mood of many delegations regarding the progress made in the COW contact group on other matters. Several delegates offered grim forecasts of how the day would turn out both inside and outside the negotiations rooms, grumbling about lack of progress "while there is a storm brewing."

Therefore, there was a collective sigh of relief when the group managed to find a creative way to fill gaps in the draft decision that called for the adoption of the report of the IWG on the future Strategic Framework of the Convention, hence avoiding reopening the entire text. With the earlier approval of the draft decision on TORs for the CRIC, the mood seemed to be lifting slightly by the afternoon: mirroring the sudden glimpse of sunlight, a breakthrough was found to move forward discussions on the drought policy advocacy framework, which, among others, welcomes the proposed Drought Initiative and Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy framework, which had already taken up most of Wednesday. Delegates agreed to append a one-page note by the Secretariat providing more guidance on the scope of the Drought Initiative and the Secretariat's role, which also paved the way for the budget contact group to approve the proposed budget for the Initiative.

But as the few sunrays retreated altogether, so too did the mood as it dawned on delegates that they still had six more decisions to finalize by morning. With informal consultations already revealing that the migration text would be particularly difficult, some delegations stated they were not prepared to begin discussion on the issue in light of the "unconventional" way it had been introduced. For many seasoned observers, the most realistic scenario to move things forward would be a brief text calling on the Secretariat to prepare a substantive report on exploring the interlinkages among DLDD, peace and security for consideration at the next COP. As the group moved into an "open-ended" evening session, which fairly swiftly wrapped up the text on synergies, some hoped that pragmatism on the more contentious issues would prevail, enabling the group to agree on the remaining six decisions texts.

The "open-ended" nature of the COW contact group also applied to the budget contact group, where issues remained on Secretariat budget scenarios and staffing.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The Earth Negotiations Bulletin summary and analysis of COP13 will be available on Monday, 18 September 2017, online at: http://enb.iisd.org/desert/cop13/

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