



## UNCCD COP 12 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2015

Delegates met in dialogues on land rights, the incentives for investment in SLM, and framing of legislation to protect and rehabilitate land during the final substantive sessions of the High-Level Segment. Contact groups continued negotiating throughout the day.

### HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

**LAND RIGHTS (DIALOGUE WITH CSOs):** This session was moderated by Paddy Woodworth, *The Irish Times*. Barbara Thomson, Deputy Minister, Environmental Affairs, SOUTH AFRICA, chaired the dialogue and described legislative measures in South Africa on land restitution and distribution in favor of dispossessed communities and individuals.

Kevin Kamuya, Utooni Development Organization, Kenya, stressed that, despite national laws recognizing customary and communal land rights, more than 60% of land in Africa is undocumented. He outlined an action plan to end “land grabs,” including: regularizing tenure of squatters; tackling weak governance and corruption in land governance systems; championing reforms and investment; and undertaking participatory reform of land tenure systems.

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Coordinator of the Indigenous Women and Peoples Association, Chad, highlighted the links between land grabs, marginalization, poverty and radicalization, and called for a multi-stakeholder discussion to agree on equitable land rights.

Highlighting that 65% of land globally is claimed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities but only 18% of this claim is recognized by governments, Michael Taylor, Director, International Land Coalition, called on governments to recognize customary land rights, and for a people-centered process to land management.

FRANCE called for tenure security and recognition of customary land rights. GUINEA cautioned that environmentally protected lands often fall under customary law. ECUADOR said his country’s constitution was the first to recognize that “nature has rights.” Stating that his country’s constitution protects land rights, BANGLADESH acknowledged that land degradation complicates this. ERITREA stated that all land is publically owned, reducing tenure conflict. The GAMBIA discussed community forest management efforts, and said they improve land access. ETHIOPIA said local farmers are responsible for land rehabilitation. KENYA identified the need to focus on community land ownership. CAMBODIA acknowledged CSOs’ efforts in technology transfer and education. CSOs called for awareness campaigns on tenure security.

**INCENTIVES FOR INVESTMENT IN SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT (DIALOGUE WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR):** Chair Benedetto Della Vedova, Vice-

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, ITALY, opened the dialogue by saying that development is a shared challenge across all sectors of society. Moderator Peter Bakker, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), emphasized that the private sector is also looking to support SDG implementation, including on land degradation. Rifat Hisarciklioğlu, Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, Turkey, reported on the recently adopted Ankara Declaration, which recognizes the economic impacts of land degradation and the financial and social benefits from SLM.

Bey Soo Khiang, APRIL Group, Indonesia, reported on the company’s objective of conserving one hectare of high-value natural forest for every hectare of concession land. Jai Schroff, UPL, India, noted that it is unfair to expect subsistence farmers to be concerned with the LDN goal and said the private sector can provide appropriate technological and capacity requirements to reduce water stress and manage wastewater.

Schroff responded to a query by GHANA on the applicability of UPL water technology to small-scale farmers, saying that it allows for water storage in the topsoil and reduced leakage, resulting in increased yields and reduced fertilizer use.

On a question by the NETHERLANDS, on how to scale-up private sector and consumers’ involvement in sustainable supply chains, Bakker highlighted innovation, collaboration and new valuation standards for companies based on natural and social protocols.

FAO noted the private sector’s role in providing advocacy, outreach and technical, besides financial, support. The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) underscored the potential of bamboo for SLM and LDN. KYRGYZSTAN noted it is difficult for its small-scale agricultural sector to contribute to the LDN target. Panelists also noted the need for governments to provide “appropriately structured” tax and legal frameworks to incentivize private sector actors to engage in land rehabilitation and restoration. The AFRICAN UNION welcomed private sector engagement on regional land initiatives such as the Africa Land Policy Initiative and the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel. CSOs called for multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize financial resources for LDN implementation.

**FRAMING OF LEGISLATION TO PROTECT AND REHABILITATE LAND (A DIALOGUE WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS):** Lina Dolores Pohl Alfaro, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, EL SALVADOR, and Ravza Kavakçi-Kan, Member of Parliament, TURKEY, co-chaired the dialogue, which was moderated by Guillermo Altares, *El País*. Calling DLDD a political issue, Pohl Alfaro suggested building political consensus. Kavakçi-Kan urged for partnerships between governments and CSOs.

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Haroun Habadi, President, UNCCD Forum of Parliamentarians, and President, National Assembly, CHAD, called for best practices, funding and research to execute land rehabilitation. Joyce Laboso, National Assembly, KENYA, suggested spatial planning at national and local levels to address competing land uses. She described Kenyan legislation and the importance of framing, to encourage stakeholder involvement.

Ali bin Saad Altokhais, Member of Parliament, SAUDI ARABIA, stressed the need for clear legislation emphasizing sustainable water use. Maria Lourdes Acosta-Alba, Congresswoman, the PHILIPPINES, stated the legislative landscape is “fraught with competing interests and lobbying,” referring to a planning law languishing in the senate.

SUDAN listed practical steps to deal with DLDD, including the implementation of appropriate legislation and capacity building. MADAGASCAR noted that parliamentarians need to understand the importance of environmental problems. AZERBAIJAN spoke of an oil fund that supports implementing laws and plans on DLDD and water resource management. MOROCCO said that following consultations with “social partners” various laws are being updated to address changing realities.

Several other countries intervened describing national experiences and legislative measures to combat DLDD and appealed to parliamentarians and the international community to increase their support. INDONESIA emphasized cooperation among all stakeholders for achieving the LDN target. The US stated that reversing land degradation is essential to achieving the goals of the Rio Conventions. CHAD queried how to mobilize finance. FAO said its Voluntary Guidelines provide a framework for countries to develop policies and legislation on land tenure. INBAR noted that bamboo use is promoted in several national policies. The AFRICAN UNION referred to its programme to expand the Green Great Wall initiative in the Southern African Development Coordination Conference area.

**CLOSING:** Lütfi Akça, Undersecretary, Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, TURKEY, on behalf of the COP 12 President, opened the session by introducing Tuesday’s three roundtable discussions. Delegates watched a video on migration caused by DLDD, with examples of positive SLM interventions based on traditional knowledge in Jordan, Senegal and Egypt.

Mahama Ayariga, Minister, Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, GHANA, summarized the roundtable on translating LDN into action. He highlighted, *inter alia*: the need to decouple economic growth from land degradation; the role of traditional knowledge to support target 15.3; policy measures based on science; and the linkages between land degradation, migration, insurgency and conflict.

Pohamba Shifeta, Minister of Environment and Tourism, NAMIBIA, summarized the discussions of the roundtable on mainstreaming drought management policy. He noted that participants identified practical policy options, including: basin level management; community mobilization; early warning systems; and sharing of best practice.

Gabriel Quijandria Acosta, Vice Minister, Strategic Development of Natural Resources, PERU, reported on the roundtable on land-based adaptation to climate change, highlighting that participants recognized, *inter alia*: the “negative synergy” between land degradation, climate change and biodiversity; the need for increased coordination with UNFCCC and integration of climate change in all financing; and the need for enhancing non-state actors’ involvement.

Akça thanked participants and closed the High-Level Segment at 6:35 pm.

## CONTACT GROUPS

**Programme and Budget:** The group met to finalize a first consideration of the budget, with the Secretariat providing more detailed information on the GM’s staffing and activity costs. One participant noted the need to align the budget discussions with

decisions made in other contact groups. Some others questioned the “significant increase” in financing for consultants in the GM. The Secretariat explained that consultants provide specific expertise and also allow the GM to engage in country-level scoping missions among other activities.

Concern was expressed that the budget focused on issues more related to climate change, security and LDN than to the Convention’s mandate. Some expressed satisfaction with the new formulation of the budget, and called for discussions on the staffing table in order to give time for regional consultations on this issue. Delegates then considered the staffing table in a closed meeting.

**CRIC:** This group considered draft decisions on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention, and formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 development agenda. On review mechanisms, the Secretariat explained that the objective is to streamline national reporting on progress indicators and financial flows, in view of the COP 9 decision calling for a four-yearly interval for reporting against performance indicators. Several delegates questioned the proposal’s timing, noting, among other concerns: the lack of clarity on the procedure to be adopted for reporting on target 15:3; the short time remaining for reporting under the current strategy; ongoing discussions on how to align a future strategy with the LDN target; continuing problems with submitting reports via the PRAIS portal; and the additional burden that the proposals would impose on affected country parties, who have already made investments to fulfil their reporting requirements under the current strategy. Several delegates called for postponing discussion of this item to COP 13. The group agreed to hold further regional consultations on this item.

With regard to action programmes in the post-2015 period, delegates’ divergent views included: establish an Intergovernmental Working Group to develop a new strategic framework for 2019-2030; revise and extend the Strategy to 2030; and undertake a review of the Strategy in the context of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, before deciding on further actions. Delegates were unable to reach agreement on the way forward. The group also agreed to invite the GEF to provide technical support for national progress reporting and target setting towards achieving LDN, noting this is not covered under GEF-6 funding for enabling activities.

## IN THE CORRIDORS

With just two days to go, COP 12 delegates rolled up their sleeves as they focused on resolving some of the stickier issues on the agenda, including the Secretariat’s staffing structure, the future of the Convention’s subsidiary bodies, and the formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 development agenda, while uncertainty still remained about progress on the LDN decision, as the contact group on non-budget matters has met in closed meetings since it started. In the process, one delegate confessed he was driven to consulting his English teacher to find language that his native English speaking colleagues would accept, but another commented that, at this late stage, “beautiful words will not bring us very far.” While COP 12 side events as well as the High-Level open dialogues have provided participants with an opportunity to grapple with how LDN could be applied locally and nationally, one observer wondered whether the scheduling of sequential rather than integrated CSO and private sector panels resulted in a missed opportunity for the two stakeholder groups to engage directly to ensure that proposals on LDN implementation reflect the interests of the most vulnerable communities.