



**BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)**

New York, 25 April 2003

Report of the Bureau Meeting

1. A meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties (COP) was convened by Mr. Charles Bassett, President of the fifth session of the COP to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The meeting was held in New York on 25 April 2003.

I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the Agenda

2. The meeting was opened at 10:00 a.m. by the President of the Bureau who welcomed the participants. The Bureau Members adopted the Agenda presented by the Secretariat.

II. Activities undertaken by the Secretariat since the last Bureau Meeting

II.1 Activities in the Regions

3. The Executive Secretary made a presentation on the activities undertaken in each of the regional implementing annexes. He stated that these activities have been conducted with the full support of various partners at bilateral and multilateral levels. He referred to the information note under this Agenda item and informed the Bureau on the status of the elaboration of National, Sub-regional and regional action programmes.

A. AFRICA

4. The Secretariat reported on support provided to countries in the period under review. To date 29 African countries have adopted their National Action Programmes (NAPs). An additional group of six countries are in the process of finalizing their NAPs.
5. The Secretariat also facilitated the preparation and organization of donors' consultations. These activities have been conducted in close collaboration with the Global Mechanism.
6. Other activities supported at national level include the organization of local and national level workshops on synergetic implementation of sustainable development conventions. Various African countries have also approached the Secretariat with requests on the National Environment Youth Corps.

7. At sub-regional level: The Secretariat provided assistance towards the development of transboundary pilot projects in the western and southern parts of the region. The Executive Secretary expressed gratitude to the Global Mechanism for its role in the on going preparation for the development of the sub regional action programme in the central part of Africa.
8. The Secretariat has been involved in various UNCCD related events such as the Council of Ministers of the Permanent Inter-States Committee for drought control in the Sahel (CILSS); the meeting on the procedures of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in the context of the implementation of the UNCCD (Cotonou, Benin April 2003).
9. At regional level: The secretariat informed the Bureau on steps that have been taken towards the launching of the Thematic Programme Network on the promotion of renewable sources of energy. The secretariat also reported on the preparation of project proposals to combat desertification in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The Secretariat further informed on the preparation of the Pan African conference preparatory to COP.6 (Cotonou, Benin 30 June - 04 July 2003).
10. At inter-regional level: the Bureau was informed on the preparatory activities for the organization of the fourth Africa Asia forum (June 2003).

B. ASIA

11. The Secretariat reported on support provide to a number of Asian countries. As of today, 16 countries have finalized their NAPs. It is expected that some five additional countries will be finalizing their NAPs by the end of 2003.
12. The secretariat informed that the agreed joint work programme with the Global Mechanism will enable other countries of the Region to formulate their NAPs in accordance with the time frame set by the Parties under decision 8/COP.4.
13. At sub-regional level: The Secretariat reported on assistance provided to the Central Asian countries for the preparation of the sub-regional action programme to combat desertification in the Aral Sea basin. The Bureau was also informed on the preparation of a survey for the establishment of a database on water resources and vegetation cover in West Africa. In North East Asia support was provided in liaison with other interested partners towards controlling dust storms. In South East Asia, the Secretariat informed on the preparation of sub-regional workshop to be held in July 2003.
14. At regional level: The Secretariat informed the Bureau on recent activities undertaken by the thematic programme networks, which deal with issues such as Benchmarks and Indicators; rangeland management and water harvesting.

The secretariat also reported on the preparation of a training course for formulation of GEF projects, which will involve some six Asian countries (May 2003, Florence, Italy). The Secretariat further informed on the preparation of the regional conference preparatory to COP.6. This event will be held in Abu Dhabi in early June 2003.

C. LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

15. The Bureau was informed on support provided to various countries of the region. As of today 7 countries have finalized their NAPs. It is expected that under the joint work programme between the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism, an additional group of 12 countries will be able to finalise their NAP processes by 2004.
16. At sub-regional level: The secretariat informed on assistance provided for the development of activities in Chaco and Puna ecosystems. The Secretariat has also facilitated in South America sub-regional workshops on the development of benchmarks and indicators.
17. At regional level: The Bureau was informed on preparatory activities for the organisation of the ninth regional meeting on the implementation of UNCCD to be held in Colombia (June 2003).

D. EUROPE

18. The Secretariat informed on efforts made in Central and Eastern Europe so as to promote the accession to the Convention by the countries that have not yet done so. Some of the countries that are developing their NAPs will be assisted through the agreed joint work programme between the secretariat and the Global Mechanism.
19. At sub-regional level: The Bureau was informed on activities undertaken by the focal points of Annex IV countries, including a meeting held in Bonn in early April 2003 with the aim to strengthen the cooperation among countries of Annex IV. The secretariat also informed on the preparation of a training session on the procedures of the GEF, which will involve some countries of Annex V. The training will be held in the Czech Republic in the summer 2003.
20. At regional level: The secretariat reported on its contribution to the preparation of the fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" to be held in Kiev, Ukraine in May 2003. The secretariat also informed on current activities in preparation for the COP.6. A regional meeting will be held at the UN office in Geneva, Switzerland in July 2003.
21. The Managing Director of the Global Mechanisms (GM) made a presentation in which he reiterated the commitment of the GM to support the development of various activities, at national, sub-regional and regional levels under the joint work programme. He informed on the preparation of donor consultations to be held by the end of the year.

E. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

22. The Secretariat reported on its efforts to facilitate the involvement of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in UNCCD related activities. In this regard, the secretariat facilitated an NGO meeting for the Mesoamerican sub region (March 2003). It is also planned to facilitate the participation of NGOs representatives in all regional meetings preparatory to COP.6 and at the COP.6 itself.
23. With regard to public awareness, the secretariat informed the Bureau on recent activities undertaken in order to ensure an enhanced visibility of the Convention at international level. In this respect, exhibits were set up and information materials distributed at various forums related to sustainable development.

The Secretariat and UNESCO continue to work closely in the development of the Environmental Education Kit on desertification. The Secretariat has also strengthened the collaborative partnerships with the public information units of the secretariats of the Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity. At the request of the Chairman of the CRIC, the Secretariat informed that the World Day to Combat Desertification will focus this year on water resources.

F. COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CST)

24. The chairman of the CST informed the Bureau on the activities of the Group of Experts of the CST. He reported also on activities relating to the establishment of a Research Centre on Traditional Knowledge in Matera, Italy; the follow-up of COP decisions regarding the implementation of phase two of the survey and evaluation of existing networks; the work of the ad hoc panel on early warning systems; the liaison with the scientific community and specialised international organizations towards developing dryland degradation assessment; the implementation of the project on desertification information systems to support national action programmes in the Mediterranean (DISMED) and the development of the roster of independent experts.
25. The Chairman of the CST informed the Bureau that the World Conservation Union has expressed interest to cooperate with the CST.
26. The representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the European Union stated the importance of the newly established CST group of experts. He said that the group needs to gain experience. The selected experts also need some resources so as to be able to carry out their activities. He suggested that COP.6 could have a closer look at the programme of work of the group of experts and take the appropriate decisions to support their activities.

G. COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION (CRIC)

27. The secretariat reported on the organization of the first session of CRIC, which was held in Rome from 11 to 22 November 2002. It was recalled that the review of the implementation of the convention was firstly conducted along the key thematic topics as identified by the COP at its fifth session. The committee assessed the program made in the implementation of the Convention through a geographic review. The committee also adopted a report, including conclusions and recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention. The report will be transmitted to COP 6 for consideration.
28. The chairperson of the CRIC informed on the consultations held soon after CRIC I, in order properly to follow-up the committee's deliberations. He highlighted his approach as to how the main recommendations and conclusions of CRIC 1 would be turned into draft decisions. He informed on the preparation of a meeting of the Bureau of the CRIC (New York, 28-29 April 2003).
29. The President of the COP agreed on the proposal made by the chairman of CRIC, and proposed to accept his report.

H. MEASURES TO PREPARE THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

30. The secretariat informed the Bureau on the results of the two planning missions, which took place in Havana, Cuba from 27 to 31 January 2003 and 31 March - 04 April 2003 respectively. These missions were led by the secretariat and included representatives of other relevant UN departments, such as conference services and security. Detailed information was provided on the conference site; lodging and transportation; communication; registration; security and visa requirements. It is expected that the Host Country agreement will be signed by the end of May 2003.
31. The representative of Cuba, host country of COP 6 made a statement in which he reiterated the commitment of the Government of Cuba to take all necessary measures so as to ensure a success of the Conference.
32. The President of the Bureau, on behalf of all Parties expressed gratitude to the Government of Cuba for his generous offer to host the COP 6. He said that as we embark in the implementation phase of the action programme it is appropriate to organise the COP in an affected Country Party.

I. REVIEW OF THE MAIN ISSUES ON THE AGENDA OF COP 6

33. The secretariat informed the Bureau on the documentation being prepared for COP 6. It was underlined that the documents included among others the following items:
 - Programme and budget for the biennium 2004-2005;
 - Review of the implementation of the Convention and of its institutional arrangements;
 - CST;
 - Review for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant Conventions and international organizations;
 - Consideration of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development;
 - Open dialogue sessions with non-governmental organizations.
34. The secretariat informed also on the tentative programme of work, including the meetings of the CRIC and the CST to be convened during the first week, while the high level segment and the meeting of the open ended ad hoc group of experts will take place during the second week. The high level segment would include round table of Heads of State and governments and an interactive dialogue at Ministerial level. Two half-day seminars are scheduled for the open dialogue with NGOs on the first and second week. The fifth round table for parliamentarians will be held on 03 and 04 September 2003.
35. Programme and budget for the biennium 2004-2005: The secretariat informed the Bureau on the status of preparation of the programme and budget for the biennium 2004-2005. It was mentioned that the document builds upon the existing structure of the Convention. It aims at strengthening services to support various activities, which are based on COP decisions and provisions under the Convention.
36. The President of the COP indicated that COP 6 does have various substantive issues that need to be discussed with representatives of regional groups prior to the Conference.
37. Activities of the GEF: The secretariat recalled relevant outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the second Assembly of the GEF regarding the designation of land degradation (desertification and forest) as a focal area of the GEF. The secretariat informed the

Bureau on the consideration of the Second GEF Assembly outcome by the 57th Session of the UN General Assembly.

38. The General Assembly recognised the strong commitment of the international community to make the GEF available as a financial mechanism of the Convention and in this regard encouraged the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to take appropriate decision to that effect at its Sixth Session.
39. At the request of the representative of Iran, speaking on behalf of Asia, the Executive Secretary provided information on steps that may be envisaged by the Conference of the Parties regarding the GEF involvement in the UNCCD implementation processes. It is anticipated that the COP 6 will give guidance on activities to be undertaken with the support of the GEF.
40. Review of the activities of the Secretariat: As requested by the COP, the Secretariat informed the Bureau on the preparation of a report on its functions under the Convention. The report will be submitted at COP 6 for consideration.
41. External review on policies, operational modalities and activities of the Global Mechanism: The Bureau was informed on the status of preparation of a document on the activities of the Global Mechanism. The document is being finalized by an evaluation team. It will be submitted at COP 6 for consideration.
42. Organization of the High Level segment at COP 6: The secretariat recalled the importance of the high level segment of the COP, which is also the political context in which Heads of State and Government, Ministers and Heads of delegations will have the opportunity to discuss policy issues and decide on orientation to be followed by Parties and the secretariat. The Bureau was therefore invited to advise the secretariat on topic(s) that can be considered during the high level segment.
43. The members of the Bureau made several suggestions, which can be summarized as follows:
 - (i) The Chairman of the CRIC reaffirmed the need to identify two different topics to discuss at the level of the Heads of State and at the level of Ministers. He stated that the “Recife Declaration” to enhance implementation of the obligations under the Convention provides elements that could constitute the basis of the discussion in the high level segment.
 - (ii) The representative of Mongolia, speaking on behalf of the Asia region referred to the outcome of the World Water Forum (Japan, March 2003) and suggested to select a topic, which include the integrated management of water resource.
 - (iii) The representative of the Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of Eastern and Central European countries, associated herself with the suggestion made by the representative of Mongolia. She believed that the linkages between desertification and water remain a priority and there is a need to engage in consultations with all policy makers.
 - (iv) The representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, stressed the importance to take forward some of the key messages from the World Summit on Sustainable Development. He proposed that topics to be selected could include land tenure issues; and the linkages between poverty eradication and NAP implementation.
 - (v) The representative of Jamaica, speaking on behalf of the LAC region, noted with satisfaction the recommendations on Island States made at CRIC 1 and proposed that part of the interactive dialogue could focus on the vulnerability of the Island States and their difficulties to fulfil their obligations vis a vis the Convention due to their limited resources.
 - (vi) The representative of Chile, also on behalf of the LAC region considered that the impacts of desertification both on climate change and biodiversity need to be emphasized.

- (vii) The Executive Secretary of the Convention stated that we should focus on how to implement issues agreed to at international level. He added that there is a need to create an enabling environment through an effective implementation of the WSSD outcomes; the Monterrey Consensus; the “Recife Declaration” and the millennium development goals.
 - (viii) The President of the COP also expressed the need to have some kind of focus through perhaps a paper that will provide the basis for a meaningful interactive dialogue. He proposed that the secretariat could narrow down the various proposals made by Bureau members.
44. Other matters: The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that in liaison with the Government of Italy, a wide consultation with members of the Bureau and some representatives of the regional groups might take place in Italy sometime in July. This consultation would be organized so as to have from the various groups a feed-back on issues that will be discussed at COP 6.

He invited also the Bureau Members to participate in the regional meetings preparatory to COP 6 so as to contribute creating the best conditions for the success of the Conference of the Parties.

The President of the COP encourages Bureau Members to remain active and contribute to consultations that would ensure the success of COP 6. He declared the meeting closed at 16:00 p.m.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<p>Mr. Charles BASSETT Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) 200 Promenade du Portage Hull, K1A OG4 - Québec Tel: (1-819) 994 8208 Fax: (1-819) 953 5229 Email: charles_bassett@acdi-cida.gc.ca</p>	<p>Mr. Ashot VARDEVANYAN Ministry of Nature Protection 35 Moskovian Str. Yerevan 375002 Republic of Armenia Tel: (374-1) 532 472 Fax: (374-1) 531 861 Email: nature@arminco.am</p>
<p>Mr. Rogatien BIAOU Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration Cotonou - Benin Fax (229) 305 348 Tel: (229) 307 260 Email : rogasbiaou@yahoo.fr</p>	<p>Mr. Etienne KAYENGEYENGE Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de l'Environnement BP 631 Bujumbura - Burundi Tel: (257) 213 257 / 825 855 Fax: (257) 241 205 Email: dp-enviro@cbinf.com</p>
<p>Dr. Zamba BATJARGAL Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mongolia to Japan Embassy of Mongolia 21-4 Kamiyama-cho, Shibuya-ku Tokyo 150-0047, Japan Tel: (81-3) 34 69 21 93 Fax: (81-3) 34 69 22 16 Email: z_batjargal@yahoo.com</p>	<p>Mr. Philbert Brown Ministry of Land and Environment 16A Half Way Tree Rd. Kingston 5, Jamaica Tel: (1-876) 754 4543 E-mail: sdemow@cwjamaica.com</p>
<p>Ms. Dagmar KUBINOVA Ministry of Environment Vrsovicke 65 11000, Prague 10 Tel: (420) 2 6712 2514 Fax: (420) 2 6712 6514 Email: dagmar_kubinova@env.cz</p>	<p>Ms. Joana TALAFRÉ Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) 200 Promenade du Portage Hull, K1A OG4 - Québec Tel: (1-819) 997 7868 Fax: (1-819) 953 5229 Email: Joana_Talafre@ACDI-CIDA.gc.ca</p>

<p>Mr. Wildfredo H. ALFARO UNCCD Focal Point Corporacion Nacional Forestal Oficina de Coordination PANCD-Chile Tel: (56-2) 390 0247 Fax: (56-2) 3900 250 Email: walfaro@conaf.cl</p>	<p>Mr. Markku AHO Ministry for Foreign Affairs P O Box 176 FIN - 00161 Helsinki Tel: (358-9) 160 564 22 Fax: (358-9) 160 561 00 Email: markku.aho@formin.fi</p>
<p>Mr. Orlando REY Director de Medio Ambiente CITMA Cuba Fax: (537) 33 80 54 or 33 86 54</p>	<p>Mr. Daniel Codorniu PUJALS Vice Ministro Primero CITMA Cuba Fax: (537) 33 80 54 or 33 86 54 Email: codorniu@citma.cu</p>
<p>Mr. Hossein MOEINI Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations 622 3rd Avenue, New York, NY 10017 Tel: (1-212) 687 2020 Fax: (1-212) 867 7086 Email: hosseinmoeini@hotmail.com</p>	<p>Mr. Guelleh I. OMAR Permanent Mission of the Republic of Djibouti to the United Nations 866 UN Plaza, Suite 4011 New York, NY 10017 Tel: (1-212) 753 3163 Fax: (1-212) 223 1276 Email: guelleh@yahoo.com</p>
<p>Mr. Rodolfo ROA Ministerio del Ambiente Y de los Recursos Naturales Centro Simón Bolívar, Torre Sur, Piso 05, El Silencio Caracas DF, Venezuela Tel: (582-12) 408 217 / 5/ 6 Fax: (582-12) 408 2177 Email: rroa@marn.gov.ve xschusler@marn.gov.ve</p>	<p>Mr. Per RYDEN Managing Director UNCCD-Global Mechanism Via del Serafico 107,00142 Rome Tel: (39-06) 545 92129 Fax: (39-06) 545 9135 Email: p.ryden@ifad.org</p>

<p>Hama Arba DIALLO Executive Secretary United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Martin-Luther-King Str. 8 53175 Bonn, Germany Tel: (49-228) 815 28 01 Fax: (49-228) 815 28 98/99 E-mail: adiallo@unccd.int</p>	<p>Grégoire de KALBERMATTEN Deputy Executive Secretary United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Martin-Luther-King Str. 8 53175 Bonn, Germany Tel: (49-228) 815 28 24 Fax: (49-228) 815 28 98/99 E-mail: gdkalbermatten@unccd.int</p>
<p>Massimo CANDELORI Coordinator for COPSUBLA United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Martin-Luther-King Str. 8 53175 Bonn, Germany Tel: (49-228) 815 28 43 Fax: (49-228) 815 28 98/99 E-mail: mcandelori@unccd.int</p>	<p>Rajeb BOULHAROUF Coordinator for External Relations and Public Information United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Martin-Luther-King Str. 8 53175 Bonn, Germany Tel: (49-228) 815 28 10 Fax: (49-228) 815 28 98/99 E-mail: rboulharouf@unccd.int</p>
<p>Melchiade BUKURU Chief of the UNCCD liaison Office United Nations Headquarters DC2 Building, 19th Floor, Office 1988 New York, NY 10017 Tel: (1-212) 963 4871 Fax: (1-917) 367 3441 Email: bukuru@un.org</p>	<p>Mohamadou -Mansour N'DIAYE Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Martin-Luther-King Str. 8 53175 Bonn, Germany Tel: (49-228) 815 28 03 Fax: (49-228) 815 28 98/99 E-mail: mndiaye@unccd.int</p>
<p>Ms. Anja THUST Programme Officer Asia Unit United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Martin-Luther-King Str. 8 53175 Bonn, Germany Tel: (49-228) 815 28 28 Fax: (49-228) 815 28 98/99 E-mail: athust@unccd.int</p>	