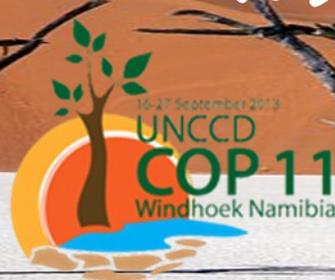


Eco - newsletter



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DECLARATION BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS



Participating in the eleventh session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. 16-27 September 2013, Windhoek, Namibia

We, the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), meeting in Windhoek on the occasion of the eleventh session of the Conference of Parties (COP 11) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), wish to thank the Government and people of Namibia and the Secretariat for the successful organization of the COP. During the COP, we the CSOs have engaged in the deliberations of the conference and have taken note that a number of issues of concern to us remain to be addressed.

The civil society urges country Parties to take a people-centered, bottom-up approach to the concept of a land degradation neutral world to ensure that this initiative contributes to improving living conditions of people living in drylands.



Ms Viviane Kinyaga delivering the declaration on behalf of CSOs

CSOs are not generally against the observer status of the private sector. CSOs strongly disagree with taking agribusiness companies producing genetically modified organisms and having patents on living organisms on board. Strong criteria based on sustainability principles are needed for obtaining observer status. Private sector activities

should be consistent with the objectives of the UNCCD and 10 Year Strategy, and avoid the conflict of interest.

We consider that mining is one of the main drivers of land degradation. Mining must not be allowed in national parks, protected areas and other sensitive dryland ecosystems. In communities where mining is already happening, compensation for the loss of land must be paid to all affected people including indigenous and traditional communities. Mine closure plans and funds for the rehabilitation of mining sites must be enforced.

Regarding the roster of independent experts, it should be extended to include all components of civil society, indigenous and local community expertise. In order to avoid bureaucracy, such experts should not have to go through a national focal point in order to be enlisted. We encourage Parties and the Secretariat of the UNCCD to make the roster operational.

Proper land tenure should be granted to indigenous and traditional communities. This includes the right to use their customary laws that they have been obeying since time immemorial. Governments must have the capacity to prevent land grabbing at the expense of communities.

CSOs are an important link between the international and grassroots level and can help disseminate good practices in desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) efficiently. Therefore we request the Parties to provide more financial support for CSOs to build the capacities of local communities to document these good practices for the effective implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018).

The empowerment of women and youth by making basic services available, such as education, clean water, energy and food production, are essential ingredients to enhance the resilience of local and especially, indigenous communities. There is a need for increased recognition of indigenous people as a constituency in the UNCCD process.

We welcome the Turkish Government's offer to host the next Conference of Parties, COP 12, in 2015. We strongly urge Canada to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the Convention and to come back as soon as possible in the interest of a sustainable world.

We congratulate Mr Luc Gnacadja, the outgoing Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, for his tremendous work during his tenure of office, and welcome the incoming Executive Secretary, Ms Monique Barbut

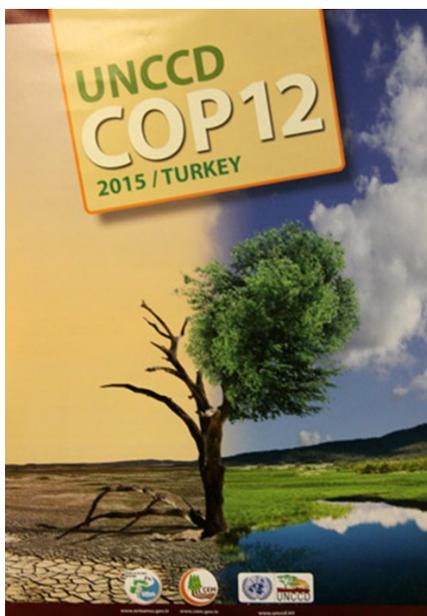
and wish her a successful tenure. We expect her to strongly support CSO engagement in the activities of UNCCD, particularly in attending international meetings and events related to DLDD. We are looking forward to fruitful collaboration with her and the Secretariat at all levels. We the CSOs, reaffirm our commitment to the success of this Convention for the benefit of communities, particularly those affected by desertification, land degradation and drought. We thank you.

Some of the decisions made by CRIC and COP that are of interest to CSOs

Decision (ICCD/COP (11)/L.12): Revised procedures for the accreditation of Civil Society Organizations and representative of the Private Sector to the Conference of the Parties and their participation in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

The COP agreed to this decision without comment. The decision addresses the concerns of limited attendance of civil society at the eleventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). The decision includes the following:

1. Invites the Parties to promote the active involvement of CSOs, including those of indigenous peoples, local communities and youth, in the Convention process at international level, including through accreditation process, with the view to ensuring the increased and more representative participation of CSOs in the sessions of COP and its subsidiary bodies.
2. Request the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism to further promote the involvement of business and private entities in UNCCD meetings and processes, and to develop a business engagement strategy outlining the objectives, modalities and conditions of UNCCD partnerships with business and private entities for consideration and approval of the Bureau of the COP ad interim and for consideration by COP at its twelfth session.
3. Urges those Parties, organizations and private sector entities, in a position to do so, to make voluntary and in-kind contributions to support a wider participation of CSOs in UNCCD meetings; and request the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism to, as appropriate, explore ways and means to raise more funding in this regards through specific initiatives based on substantive inputs from CSOs in the intergovernmental process.
4. Decides that the composition of CSO Selection Panel should include two representatives from the Secretariat and one representative from CSOs from countries belonging to each of the five UN regional groups of member states.
5. Requests the Executive Secretary to facilitate the renewal of memberships to the CSO Selection Panel by January 2014, and decides these memberships should be renewed every two years.
6. Also requests the Executive Secretary to report to the COP at



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its twelfth session on the implementation of this decision, including the report of the CSO Selection Panel on the implementation of its tasks.

Decision ICCD/COP (11)/ L.4: Improving mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention.

The COP agreed to this decision without comment. This decision, among other things, invites the Parties, international organizations, private sector and CSOs to become more involved with the Regional Coordination Mechanisms process by, inter alia, providing technical and financial support to the process and to the Regional coordination Units, including through voluntary contributions to the Supplementary Fund and contributions in-kind, as appropriate.

Decision (ICCD/CRIC (12)/L.1): Strengthening and enhancing the process of alignment and implementation of action programs with the Strategy.

The CRIC agreed to this decision without comment. The decision addresses the need to: integrate NAPs into national development plans; facilitate and simplify access to financing, including through the GEF and climate financing; and include private sector and grassroots organizations in the alignment process.

The decision also recommends that parties intensify efforts to, inter alia: formulate and/or align their NAPs to address gaps in SLM and ensure coherence with other sectorial policies; incorporate SLM monitoring into existing national monitoring systems; and consider the added value of the alignment process as an awareness-raising tool for policy makers, and in light of the outcome of the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy, including possible incentive schemes for alignment.

The decision further calls on the next CRIC session to agree on a clear understanding of the integrated financing strategy and integrated investment framework processes, and discuss a plan for the NAP alignment process in relation to overall SLM goals.

It also invites various multilateral entities to continue their work on a coherent UN system-wide contribution to implementing the Convention and tackling land challenges.

Acknowledgements

Ten eco-newsletters have been published during the UNCCD COP 11. Our deepest gratitude goes to CSO colleagues whose immense contributions made all eco-newsletter publications possible. We also thank the donors for the financial support. Thank you! See you in Turkey, at UNCCD COP 12

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