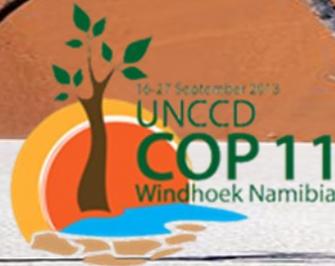


Eco - newsletter



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Eco-newsletter has been published by Non-Governmental Groups at major conferences since the Stockholm Environmental Conference in 1972. This issue is produced by groups attending the UNCCD COP 11 in Windhoek, Namibia



A close to empty plenary hall during the second ODS (picture courtesy of IISD)

Eco asks.... Why did the Parties shun, CSOs' 2nd Open Dialogue Session?

Eco noted with sadness on the poor attendance by Parties to the Second Open Dialogue Session. Eco believes that ODS provide a unique platform for Parties to engage CSOs on their concerns as well as explore and share ideas on collaboration and synergy for the implementation of the UNCCD. Eco would like to urge the UNCCD secretariat to encourage Parties to take interest and participate in future ODSs. Eco would like to thank the Parties that made time for the ODSs.

CSOs' initial reaction to the CST draft decision

CSOs would like to draw the attention of the Parties to draft decision number 4, item number 4 in the document 'Consideration of progress made in the organization of international, interdisciplinary scientific advice in the Convention process (document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/L.3)' submitted by the CST chair. If this COP accept this draft decision (item number 4, of draft decision 4), CSOs would like to propose Parties should clearly state the modality that will be used for the selection of the representative of CSOs on the Bureau of Committee on Science and Technology.

An Inconvenient Truth...??

It might be that some ODS panellists used the forum to promote their personal interests and purposes other than those assigned by the UNCCD and the UN. It might be that these panellists are great entrepreneurs for whom the right to land, food security and a chosen life are of little consideration. It might be that these panellists have come to Windhoek in their private jet. It might be that one day, soon, these kind of people will dictating to the Convention what to do. On that day our wake up might be brutal. But these are only hypothesis!

Second Open Dialogue Session of COP 11

The CSOs would like to thank the UNCCD Secretariat and the Parties for the commitment to promote their participation and contribution to the COP through the Open Dialogue Sessions (ODS). The second ODS of COP 11 was convened, on the 25th of September 2013, under the theme "Capacity Building for CSOs for the effective implementation of the UNCCD". During this ODS, CSOs shared experiences on the theme within the context of capacity building at national and international levels. The following are the capacity building experiences, at national and international levels, shared by panellists.

Ms Viviane Kinyaga, the Director of the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), outlined activities of the Summer Land Care Programme (SLCP), a capacity development and building initiative undertaken in collaboration with national research and training institutions, and other local and international partners. She explained that SLCP is a two months internship and mentoring programme which aims to strengthen the capacity of young scientists and students, to apply research for problem solving, and foster critical thinking. She also highlighted that over the years, the SLCP has produced students that have gone on to become prominent environment decision/policy makers in Namibia.

Mr Kenneth Ganeb, also from the DRFN, highlighted national level

capacity building and development activities, in relation to the implementation of the UNCCD. He explained that the DRFN achieves this through its participation in the Forum for Integrated Resources Management (FIRM). He elucidated that FIRM has two primary objectives which are to strengthen technical and management capacities of community based organizations, such as women's groups and farmers associations; and to encourage community based organizations to be involved in the decision making processes for sustainable natural resource management and sustainable land management. Focus group discussions, participatory workshops, exchange visits, seminars and radio programs, inter alia, are some of the conduits that FIRM uses for capacity building.

Ms Maria Tharacky Namupala, from Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WINSA), started by highlighting her organization's efforts to increase political recognition and human rights for San communities in the sub-region, centred on inclusive education at all levels as well as access to natural resources. WINSA also lobbies for the protection of ecosystems, which are the primary source of livelihoods for the San. She also explained that WINSA also develops and builds the capacity of San communities in the area of sustainable natural resources management. This is mainly achieved through participatory workshops at community level. Ms Namupala concluded by saying "anything for us without us is against us," she urged parties to involve indigenous peoples in the UNCCD decision-making processes.

Ms Nahideh Naghizadeh, from the Centre of Sustainable Development in Iran, highlighted activities to align Iran's NAP with the Strategy that included participatory capacity building workshops for key stakeholders at community level. This enabled the stakeholders to undertake critical analyses of their situation, envision a desirable future, and develop a road map and action plan towards this future. Ms Naghizadeh also noted that the workshops had not only raised awareness among affected communities, but also they had contributed to building sustainable relationships between community-based organizations, government officials and the UNCCD National Focal Point responsible for NAP alignment.

Ms Fatima Kaba, from ENDA Energie Senegal, highlighted her organization's efforts in connecting actors and actions at local and international levels. She described efforts to develop a platform through which CSOs could develop a common vision and build capacity to participate in political events, such as the UNCCD COP. She said priorities of CSOs in the Sahel region include food security, new and renewable energies, agroforestry and sustainable natural resource management. She highlighted efforts to ensure that work on the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel (GGWSS) initiative takes local concerns into account, and noted local communities see it as both a development and environmental project.

Ms Nathalie van Haren, from Both ENDS, the Netherlands, presented on awareness raising and capacity building through Civil Society networks: experiences from DRYNET. She highlighted DRYNET success stories, including the re-cultivation of saffron on previously cotton-dominated fields in Turkey, which had become salty and nutrient-poor, and that resulted in improved ecological, social and economic opportunities. She also described an organic roiboos tea cooperative in South Africa that created quality standards that helped protect local ecology and promote premium prices. In both case studies, she highlighted the important role the DRYNET network played in building the capacity of local NGOs to implement the activities, majority of which contribute to the UNCCD.

Reaction of some Parties and delegates during the opening dialogue session

The USA intervened by encouraging CSO on the role they play. USA added that CSO dialogues often overly concentrate on relationships between Parties and CSOs, and lauded presenters for explaining the relationships between CSOs and local people. However, the USA would like CSOs to highlight more how they are building these partnerships with communities. How CSOs are getting in touch with local communities rather than describing the activities of their organization.

The PHILIPPINES underscored the role of CSOs in nation building but lamented that

many lack necessary support and assistance to carry out their work. The Party from the Philippines requested the Secretariat insert this issue into the work programme of the COP.

BURKINA FASO said we need to think globally but act locally, and that the private sector, government and civil society must work in solidarity with one another. He said only through dialogues such as the CSO dialogue and similar ones at the national level can progress be made on sustainable development. He urged CSOs to ensure that this dialogue expands to encompass voices of communities that are most vulnerable.

Patrice Burger, CARI, France, thanked panelists for the diverse perspectives shared, noting their experiences can be multiplied many times over in drylands. He cautioned that all good practices are context-specific and some models, such as the Kubuqi desert initiative, may be difficult to replicate at the global level as few countries are in a position to offer alternative livelihoods to communities affected by DLDD.

Be sure to offset your UNCCD COP 11 travel by supporting a Namibian community solar project.



30 volunteers have already offset their COP11 travel by 25th September, 2013. When will you participate?