



- MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COP 15 BUREAU (8 MAY 2024) -

The fourth intersessional COP 15 Bureau meeting took place virtually on 8 May 2024. Opening remarks were provided by the COP 15 President, Mr. Alain Richard Donwahi, and UNCCD Executive Secretary Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw.

An overview of matters discussed, and decisions taken by the Bureau are presented below.

I. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted without modification.

II. Status of Organisation of COP16

a. Presentation by the Host Country

The representative of Saudi Arabia informed the bureau that the Host Country Agreement (HCA) was signed on the 31 January 2024 in Riyadh by His Excellency the Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture and UNCCD Executive Secretary.

Since the last COP15 Bureau meeting held in November in Samarkand, COP 16 was promoted in many global and regional events, including, UNFCCC COP 28 in Dubai, the World Economic Forum in Davos and the sixth UNEA in Nairobi, where resolution 6-14 was adopted following a proposition by Saudi Arabia titled:

“Strengthening international efforts to combat desertification and land degradation, restore degraded land, promote land conservation and sustainable land management, contribute to land degradation neutrality, and enhance drought resilience”

The representative of the host country further added that the COP 16 Logo and the official website are operational; a third planning mission UNCCD and UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) was also planned for mid may 2024.

The representative concluded by informing that thematic meetings are being held regularly between the UNCCD secretariat and the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA).

b. Draft agenda

The secretariat explained that the draft agenda was essentially structured around two chapters and two annexes.

Chapter one addresses COP16 Programme of work as adopted at COP15 (dec 33/COP1) :

- an additional substantive sub-item on: “grassland and rangelands matters” was added under agenda item 4 on Policy Frameworks following the request received by the secretariat on 28 February from Botswana and;



- preliminary information received from the forthcoming COP16 Presidency on the organization of a special segment during the COP16 including a Leaders Summit at a date to be determined.

Chapter two, on annotations to the provisional, lists all the official documents that the secretariat is duty bound to present, including three separate documents with draft decisions to be considered by the COP, CRIC and CST.

Annex I presents the tentative schedule of work of the COP16 including COP and CoW Plenary meetings. It also contains preliminary information on the proposed timing of the special segment, as follows:

- A *High-level segment* including a Leaders Summit to be organized by the COP16 forthcoming Presidency at a date to be determined (tentatively 2 - 3 Dec),
- *High-level interactive dialogues* on: (a) agri-food systems, (b) land governance and (c) science-innovation and technology (5 - 9 December),
- Two *Ministerial dialogues* on drought resilience and finance (10 - 11 December) and as well
- Special events including:
 - Business for Land Forum (4 Dec),
 - Gender Caucus, Youth Forum and Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLC dialogue) (7 Dec).

Finally, Annex II -presents the general overview of the COP16 schedule of work including also plenary meeting of the CRIC and CST.

The secretariat finally informed that further to the endorsement of the agenda, the latter will be forwarded to UNOG for processing while an advance unedited copy in English only will be posted on the UNCCD website.

A bureau member thanked the secretariat for introducing the agenda and further welcomed the special event on the Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLC dialogue) as this is the first time such an event would be organized during UNCCD COP session.

On the organizational matters, the same bureau member referred to the accreditation of intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations and representatives from the private sector, and admission of observers. The bureau member referred to the controversies during CRIC21 regarding the presence of CSO in contact groups indicating that the bureau should consider how a more active participation of CSO could be guaranteed, to avoid the tensions experienced during CRIC21. The member proposed to reach out to the CRIC bureau to further discuss on the participation of the CSO in the contact groups, so as to allow their participation at the COP and CRIC sessions, asking at the same time for orientation on this matter by the Secretariat.

The bureau further referred to the paragraph (f) on the Organization of work, including the sessions of the subsidiary bodies and enquired on the implementation of the UN Code of Conduct of Harassment (including sexual harassment) during COP16.

The bureau member finally requested two agenda items to be included to the agenda of the fifth COP 15 Bureau members, particularly : the Civil society organizations



participation (and not negotiation) at the COPs sessions and a presentation of the implementation of the UN code of conduct on harassment during COP16.

A second bureau member thanked the secretariat for the proposal agenda that covers many important topics. The bureau member also recalled that his country submitted an official request to add a new additional item to the COP16 agenda namely: the inclusion of innovation and technology in ecologically sustainable agrifood systems.

The bureau member also conveyed comments to the COP16 agenda on behalf of JUSCANZ :

- suggested the addition of ‘synergies across the Rio conventions at the national level’ in particular links between the UNCCD and GBF Target 2/NBSAPs + LDN and the UNFCCC as a topic of a new high-level dialogue and/or thematic issue;
- suggested to discuss ‘drought resilience’ and ‘land restoration’ in both high-level ministerial dialogues for complementarity, not solely as a finance issue;
- amendment of the title of the second ministerial dialogue to ‘*unlocking finance for land restoration and drought resilience for unlocking finance from all sources for land restoration and drought resilience*’.
- suggested addition of : ‘*nature positive in the context of accelerating land restoration*’ and of ‘*SDGs making progress towards SDG 15 (Life on Land)*’ under Policy frameworks and thematic issues.

Another bureau member asked clarification about *visa* and steps that the host country is taken to ease the process for countries that do not have Saudi Arabia diplomatic representations.

Another bureau member enquired about the opportunity to submit written comments after the bureau meeting.

On the issue of the CSOs participation in the contact groups, the secretariat recalled that there are no specific procedures delineated in the COP Rule of Procedure to deal with informal setups. It is, hence, up to Parties to reach a consensus on the matter. The secretariat further underlined that it stood ready to organize any type of consultation among process management bodies to address the matter intersessionally.

On the issue related to the UN Code of Conduct the secretariat confirmed that is being fully implemented at all sessions of its governing bodies, further recalling its zero-tolerance policy regarding harassment, particularly sexual harassment.

The secretariat further underlined that note has been duly taken of the request of the COP bureau member and the two agenda items will be added to the next COP 15 Bureau meeting.

On the visa issues, the host country informed that consultations are on-going with the secretariat to make the visa process fast and easy for delegates, including full consideration of delegates without a Saudi Arabia diplomatic representation.

On the synergy among the three COPs, the COP 15 President informed that a joint statement with the COP28 (UNFCCC) and COP15 (UNCBD) Presidency is being finalized



and will be soon signed, with a view to coordinate actions and enhanced cooperations among the three sister conventions.

The bureau agreed to have one additional week to collect any eventual comments from bureau members. Should there be no further objections, the secretariat will forward the draft agenda to UNOG for edition and translation.

III. Other Business

No point has been raised under this agenda item.

IV. Next Meeting

A next COP 15 bureau meeting is foreseen by the end of June in Bonn, Germany.