

## UNCCD COP 15 Highlights: Thursday, 19 May 2022

While the pace increased towards the end of the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 15), tensions in the negotiations also rose, as decisions on drought and the budget remained the only outstanding draft decisions under discussion in the contact groups. In the morning, the COP convened in plenary and adopted the report of the 20th session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). In the afternoon, the Committee of the Whole (COW) forwarded 10 draft decisions to the COP on: the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; policy frameworks and thematic issues; procedural matters; and programme and budget.

### Conference of the Parties

#### UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework: COP 15

President Alain-Richard Donwahi opened the fifth meeting of the COP. CRIC Chair Andrew Bishop presented the CRIC report, summarizing the recommendation to adopt eight draft decisions.

Chair Bishop also noted the election of four Vice-Chairs for the CRIC's twenty-first and twenty-second sessions: David Payang (Cameroon); Abduvokhid Zakhadullaev (Uzbekistan); Karima Lince (Panama); and Baptiste Astrade (France).

The COP plenary adopted the CRIC decisions.

### Committee of the Whole

Chair Francisco Jose Avila opened the fourth meeting of the Committee of the Whole (COW).

The Chair introduced 10 draft decisions and proposed to change language from “vulnerable groups” to “people in vulnerable situations” as agreed in the contact group on other matters. The COW adopted the following draft decisions with minor amendments as orally presented:

- UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework: Review of progress in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification communication plan and the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020) (ICCD/COP(15)/L.9);
- policy frameworks and thematic issues: the positive role that measures taken under the Convention can play to address desertification/land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that causes migration (ICCD/COP(15)/L.10); follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: sand and dust storms (ICCD/COP(15)/L.11); land tenure (ICCD/COP(15)/L.12); and gender (ICCD/COP(15)/L.13);
- programme and budget: Designation of a Convention secretariat and arrangements for its functioning: administrative and support arrangements (ICCD/COP(15)/L.5); and
- procedural matters: Programme of work for the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (ICCD/COP(15)/L.8).

**Procedural matters: Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification:** On decisions

ICCD/COP(15)/L.1 and ICCD/COP(15)/L.3, the COW heard statements from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Youth.

Association for Research and Integrated Development, for CSOs, presented the Declaration of the CSOs, highlighting the active participation of over 1,200 of their members in UNCCD COP 15 and provided recommendations, relating to gender, sustainable land management (SLM) and land restoration, finance, humanizing drought, and land rights and tenure. She called upon parties to act with urgency on desertification, land degradation and drought, and to engage with CSOs.

International Forestry Students Association, for YOUTH, presented the Declaration of the Youth Forum. She highlighted the importance of meaningful participation of youth in decision making, and their role in SLM and restoration. Pointing to the Global Youth Caucus as the formal representation of young people and children within the Convention, she called for a designated space for youth as an “independent section” within UNCCD, akin to the status of CSOs.

The COW adopted draft decisions ICCD/COP(15)/L.1 and ICCD/COP(15)/L.3.

### Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the business engagement strategy:

On decision ICCD/COP(15)/L.2, Abou Bamba, Côte d'Ivoire, presented the report of the Green Business Forum, highlighting the launch of the Business for Land (B4L) initiative, and the Great Green Wall Sourcing Challenge. He called for the development of time-bound targets and clear standards for soil health to enable private investment and better monitoring, and discussed barriers for the private sector to access green and sustainable finance.

The COW adopted draft decision ICCD/COP(15)/L.2.

### In the Corridors

Dark clouds greeted delegates arriving for the penultimate day of the COP, quite symbolic of the storm brewing behind closed doors of contact groups. Things became tense particularly in the discussions on drought, where even the usually highly popular photographer was told “not to hang around for too long” and one Secretariat member whispered: “today is the day!”

Delegates left the meeting rooms with mixed reports, some feeling good progress had been made, while others were still “flexing their muscles” metaphorically, saying “we will not budge.” On forcing a legally binding instrument at this COP, an insider warned, “let’s not take a big bite that we can’t chew.” The Chair appeared cheerful and determined to conclude the dreaded drought discussion, “even if it continues all night!”

From the budget contact group not a sound was heard, with delegates mum on whether they had made progress or were at a stalemate. Most outsiders simply suspected that, as with most of the week, the group was sitting idle, while waiting for the draft decision on drought.

The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COP 15 will be available on Monday, 23 May 2022 at [enb.iisd.org/convention-combat-desertification-unccd-cop15](http://enb.iisd.org/convention-combat-desertification-unccd-cop15)