

the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification

open dialogue session shared firsthand experiences of how civil society is working to ensure healthy soil, sustainable agriculture, and social and environmental well-being. With agriculture needing

ecosystems, and meet the demands of a growing population.

(CST) began discussions on the work of the Convention's

The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the

objectives 1-4 of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.

## Open Dialogue Session

on inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD, underscored that the UNCCD is

one full day to a dialogue with civil society organizations (CSOs).

remarking that the session acts as a platform that amplifies on-the-

concrete actions that support women, youth, small-scale farmers,

reallocation of environmentally harmful subsidies toward drought

Siddhesh Sakore, 2024 UNCCD Land Hero, said, growing up he witnessed the challenges and hardships faced

how his research on severe soil degradation led him to found Agro Rangers to bring positive change to farmers' lives while promoting sustainable agriculture and social and environmental well-being.

Erimelinda Temba, Islands of Peace, spoke of their work supporting communities in northern Tanzania through

awareness and advocacy at the national level. She discussed successes including the diversification of farming practices,

Priyanka Patil, Golden Era Eco Services, shared stories of resilience from rural India. She highlighted that external pressures

food systems to monocultures and cash crops, which harm soil

of activities, such as crop rotation, mixed cropping, and water

Glenda Mangia, Fundación CAUCE, described the "death spiral" of adding fertilizer to soil, using genetically modified seeds, producing food containing multiple toxins, and the resulting soil degradation. She explained that her work focuses on building

improving soils and increasing productivity by 55% in a few

"handholding" through helpline systems as the cornerstone of the transition. He said building back soil health by using animal urine

Sopike Babalashvili, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network, discussed how to engage youth in the transformation of agri-food

allow them to reimagine innovative and creative approaches to food systems. She noted that youth, when equipped with the right tools and accessible funding within an enabling environment, can

the deep ecological and spiritual significance of food to

Indigenous Peoples. She described the Indigenous knowledges that support efforts to combat land degradation and desertification.

narrowly views food as a commodity, stressing the need for a holistic approach that centers the ecological relationship between food, people, and the land as a cultural way of life.

of CSOs, giving examples of collaborative projects with

civil society participation in decision-making. UN WOMEN highlighted women's land rights, food system transformation, and

Following a question on how to ensure synergies between of coordination between all ministries responsible for land can be the common ground linking the challenges across desertification, biodiversity loss, and climate change.

responding to a question about the Island of Peace's working methods, highlighted that they support over 800 farmers, with a focus on women and youth inclusion.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES asking for parties to change "agri-food systems" to "food systems and agriculture" because the latter goes beyond the concept of a commodity, instead recognizing how food is rooted to culture and "connected to everything."

Mangia and Ethirajalu, responding to questions on knowledge exchange, agreed that sharing experience is "vital," but noted knowledge needs to be adapted to local and regional contexts.

knowledge sharing and collaboration between CSOs.

Following questions on land degradation and farming practices, Siddhesh underscored the role of traditional knowledge and local

inequitable food distribution, and food loss due to a lack of storage

Ethirajalu emphasized the importance of providing financial and

Regarding mobilizing resources for youth, Babalashvili partnerships with the private sector at the local level. Ethirajalu formal education but relies on the transfer of knowledge between farmers' knowledge.

technology, acknowledged fears around the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) but explained that youth are "digital natives," and that young people are catalyzers who can leverage technology in appropriate ways to promote education.

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- Limiting water-intensive business practices and land-degrading
- Supporting locally-led actions and knowledge exchange
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- Building local institutions to support small-scale sustainable

## Committee on Science and Technology

### Coordination activities of the Science-Policy Interface with

Héctor Manuel Arias Rojo (Mexico) opened the session and the

The SPI Co-Leads presented key messages from the report of the two SPI working groups on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, with SPI Chair Nichole Barger moderating the session.

Citing the potential risks and co-benefits of large-scale is both a source and sink for greenhouse gas emissions, and that significant short-term mitigation potential at relatively low costs. efficiency and land restoration; adopting an integrated landscape

VENEZUELA called on the SPI to incorporate their country's experiences to broaden the science base. The EU recommended the SPI strengthen interactions with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the IPCC. SENEGAL requested the SPI to adopt an

SWITZERLAND warned that issues such as biofuels can present both benefits and risks for food security. CSOs stressed

with other scientific bodies is key and encouraged including local and Indigenous knowledges alongside scientific findings.

new emerging issues: grassland and rangeland and ecologically ( ). He said the US requested this new item on

systems, adding a draft text was prepared by the Secretariat and that it would be made available.

The US noted the draft text was developed in consultation with stakeholders, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO), CST Bureau, and other parties. He added that the goal is to

KAZAKHSTAN highlighted synergies between food change. GRENADA supported the US submission and highlighted an expanding collaboration among 14 Caribbean countries to

tackle land and soil degradation. The CSOs and INDIGENOUS

“agri-food” means commodities. They called for environmental and social safeguards, cautioning the impact of new agricultural

CGIAR welcomed the US proposal and drew attention to a nature-positive and circular approach, empowerment of farmers, and CGIAR’s agrobiodiversity solution hotspot tool.

environments would support restoration of agricultural land,

CAMBODIA called for the SPI and the UNCCD Secretariat to further develop tools and innovations based on science, and make

forest pastures that address broad interests of pastoral stewardship

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The CST Bureau proposed that: the SPI should be established as a continuous, standing body; the future SPI work programme focus on the delivery of high-profile, science-based information products; the work programme be extended to four years from two; the SPI extend its role in the UNCCD to the provision of practical, rapid, scientific advice to the work of the Bureau

prioritizing requests put to the SPI work programme, as well

provided with more information and opportunities to contribute to the work of the SPI; and that the five CST Bureau members serve on the SPI. It was also recommended that the Secretariat intensify its efforts to secure more financial resources and technical support

TE D’IVOIRE supported all recommendations put forward by the Bureau, emphasizing its support to establish

restoration of scientific conferences under the auspices of the

based on regional diversity but also the scientific competencies of

core budget does not allow its effective operation. In addition, they asked whether there is sufficient additional scientific value for this.

AUSTRALIA, with NAMIBIA, ALGERIA, and MALAWI supported transitioning to a standing body. The US acknowledged the complexity of the decision and supported the proposal with the trust that it will be done in a cost-neutral manner. CSOs reiterated the need to integrate local and Indigenous knowledges into the science on desertification, land degradation, and drought.

Group.

### Contact Groups

Facilitated by Asher Nkegbe (Ghana), the COW

to consider an amendment to the Convention, there was still no agreement on which option or combination of options to choose (protocol, declaration, global framework on drought resilience, COP guidance, or COP decision). Some argued that they first need to determine what needs to be done to address drought and then what options are best. After much discussion on the way forward,

region. The group will meet Friday and report back to the contact

of the Rio Conventions, which drew diverging opinions on whether to retain or delete. The proposal to add “in line with

integration of land tenure in line with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines attracted criticism and disagreement. Parties also

The CRIC contact group, facilitated by Alwin

objectives 1-4 of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. Delegates expressed concern with the drafting and editing procedure for the text. After prolonged discussion of the procedure, and debate as to whether to reopen previously agreed text, delegates agreed to instead resume discussion based on bracketed text from Tuesday evening. Delegates then considered preambular text on concerns, including whether to refer to overexploitation of “resources,” “natural resources,” “sustainable” or “unsustainable” land use intensification, or sustainable land use systems. Discussion

(Grenada), met in the evening. Parties continued considering the

building technical capacity to assess and track individual land use systems. A final paragraph with multiple sub-paragraphs

proposals for additional text but steady progress was made.

### In the Corridors

On Thursday, the focus shifted to the work CSOs are doing to that the UNCCD devotes a full day of the COP to CSOs, reflected

CSOs reflected on the morning’s session, with one calling it “a strong discussion that set the stage for further talks next week.” Another expressed some trepidation, pointing out that “there were a lot of empty chairs, but the discussion was still rich and

women, and youth.” While parties agree that engaging many voices is vital to fulfilling the aims of the Convention, one CSO emphasized that “mere acknowledgment is not enough; these