

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Conference of the Parties 9.

Buenos Aires, 21 September - 2 October 2009

The [ninth UNCCD Conference of the Parties](#) was held along with the eighth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention ([CRIC8](#)) and the ninth session of the Committee on Science and Technology ([CST9](#)), in an international context stressed by the importance of the environmental issues that will lead to the [15th UNFCCC Conference of the Parties](#) in Copenhagen.

Desertification, “land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors including climatic variations and human activities” ([Art.1 UNCCD](#)), is an economic, social and environmental problem with which international community has long been concerned. In 1997 a United Nations Conference on Desertification was held in Nairobi. In 1992, thanks to UNEP’s efforts, the issue was included in the Rio Conference’s agenda ([Agenda 21; chapter 12](#)), which generated that the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution ([A/RES/47/18](#)) that finished with the adoption of the UNCCD in 1994, ratified in 1996, being signed nowadays by 193 countries. Since 1996 several COP’s have been held. The first one took place in Roma in 1997 ([COP1](#)).

[COP8](#), held in Madrid in 2007, adopted the [10 year Strategic Plan to Implement the Convention \(2008-2018\)](#), which has influenced the background of the agenda and main issues of the Buenos Aires meeting. Also in Madrid was proposed to establish the 2010-2020 decade as the *Decade for Deserts and Combating Desertification* ([Decision 2/COP8](#)), even though UNGA has not yet established how to apply it.

COP9

In Buenos Aires the main issues of the agenda have been the budget review, communication strategy and, what could be called the “intern coherence” of how the Convention works, in other words, the relationship between the parties of the process, especially, between the [Global Mechanism](#) (GM) and the [Secretary](#).

Civil Society (CS) participation was very important. More than 850 organizations attend to the meeting. They were very critical of the outcomes and the procedure ([CS Statement](#) in Spanish), even though the obvious synergy between the Convention’s objectives and the policies implemented by organizations (check [IISD document](#)).

COP conclusions (an in-depth analysis can be found in the [IISD document p. 15-18](#)) were disappointing, even though the improvements in the resources allocation or the work done by the CST, especially, in the identification of some scientific indicators to seize desertification impact and the establishment of a Panel of Experts like the one for the climate change (IPCC). There were disagreements regarding the budget and the function of the GM within the Convention structure, mainly with the Secretary. But there are more structural disagreements: the political-institutional fragmentation originated by the relation between the Convention bodies (to be solved in COP10); the discussion about whether the Convention should cover environmental or development issues; or if it seeks a global mandate over soil degradation or if it should focus on African dry lands.

COP9 has shown deep contradictions that states have in multilateral negotiation forums, thus affecting the improvements in issues such as desertification that is having a great impact on poor countries and requires effective global governance now, more than ever.

For a deeper analysis check the [IISD](#), [Choike](#) and [Fundación IPADE](#) documents.