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منظمة  
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للأمم المتحدة

# COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

## Twenty-fourth Session

Rome, 29 September - 3 October 2014

### Major Outcomes of the Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

1. The Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Treaty) was held in Muscat, Oman, on 24-28 September 2013. The Governing Body has reconfirmed the importance of the Treaty as a main element of the International Regime on Access and Benefit-sharing, and made crucial decisions to enable necessary evolution of the Treaty in the 2014-2015 biennium.

#### Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System

2. A major breakthrough made at the Fifth Session of the Governing Body is the establishment of an “Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing”. The Working Group would develop a range of measures for consideration and decision by the Governing Body at its Sixth Session that will (i) increase user-based payments and contributions to the Benefit-sharing Fund in a sustainable and predictable long-term manner, and (ii) enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System (MLS) by additional measures.

3. The first meeting of the Working Group was held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 14-16 May 2014. It reviewed first the factors leading to the current short-fall of user-based income to the Benefit-sharing Fund; and the six innovative approaches for generating income for the Benefit-sharing Fund that were identified during the last biennium. It was agreed to keep all approaches under review in preparation for the second meeting. In its later meetings, the Working Group would need to consider the expansion of Treaty access and benefit-sharing provisions, to enhance the functioning of the MLS.

4. At the end of the first meeting, a number of recommendations regarding the preparation of the second and third meetings were provided, including on the schedule for the next meetings and the studies being prepared by the Secretariat for the second meeting. The Working Group also requested the Co-Chairs to continue the established practice of consulting intersessionally with stakeholder groups, in a formal, transparent and inclusive manner and to report back on progress at the second meeting. It requested the Regional Groups to enable consultations amongst Contracting Parties and with stakeholders during the intersessional period in preparation for the second meeting. Finally, the Working Group also requested the stakeholders groups to consult their constituencies and to report on the outcomes during the second meeting.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Report of the first meeting of the Working Group is available at:  
<http://www.planttreaty.org/content/first-meeting-ad-hoc-open-ended-working-group-enhance-functioning-multilateral-system-access>



## **Sustainable Use**

5. The Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) and Supporting Initiatives has been endorsed by the Governing Body at the Fifth Session. It will be implemented in cooperation with relevant FAO technical units and other institutions such as the CGIAR and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The recognized elements of the Supporting Initiatives of the Programme of Work include the Platform for the Co-development and Transfer of Technology which, after the Governing Body's session, is rapidly piloting a first information-sharing and capacity-building facility, and the Public-Private Partnerships for Pre-Breeding, a policy forum aiming at promoting the widest possible access to high-potential, stabilized, and pre-commercial material.

6. Subject to the availability of financial resources, the Governing Body has also decided to reconvene the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use of PGRFA. The Committee will provide advice to the Secretary on (i) coordination of the Programme of Work, (ii) cooperation with the CBD and other international processes and institutions, and (iii) development of the toolbox on sustainable use of PGRFA in order to assist Contracting Parties in the implementation of Article 6 of the Treaty, taking into consideration appropriate parts of Article 5.

## **Farmers' Rights**

7. The resolution on Farmers' Rights of the Governing Body has requested the Secretariat, among other things, to (i) review the submissions made by Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders on the implementation of Farmers' Rights; (ii) derive examples, in a systematic way, as options for national implementation of Article 9 of the Treaty, and contact organizations and possible peer reviewers of the document on examples; (iii) report on relevant discussions that relate to Farmers' Rights within FAO fora, including the Committee on World Food Security; and (iv) invite UPOV and WIPO to jointly identify possible areas of interrelations among their respective international instruments. Contracting Parties are also equally invited to take initiatives to protect and promote Farmers' Rights, such as considering reviewing and/or developing national action plans for the implementation of Article 9, convening workshops and consultations for the exchange of knowledge, views and experience.

## **Global Information System**

8. Giving the importance of the development of a global information system to facilitate the exchange of information on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to PGRFA, the Governing Body has requested the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration with relevant FAO departments and other stakeholders, especially with the CBD, to promote greater access to relevant data and information by Contracting Parties and other stakeholders. Based on the relevant resolution, the preparation has been under way to call for an expert consultation on the Global Information System of Article 17 of the Treaty. Based on the inputs of the expert consultation, a vision paper would be prepared to serve as the basis for a detailed and realistic work programme for the Global Information System in line with Article 17.

9. In this context, the Secretariat has initiated an information gathering exercise for an expert consultation, including one with the academic sector, the issuance of a notification calling for inputs and a series of surveys to map out the current landscape of projects, initiatives as well as gaps and needs at country and regional levels. It is expected that together with the vision, experts will discuss a roadmap to implement the Global Information System. A major step forward at operational level is the support that the Secretariat is currently providing to the Initiative DivSeek in the area of plant genomics and data interoperability. The Global Crop Diversity Trust (GCDT) hosts and implements the facilitation unit for DivSeek jointly with the Treaty's Secretariat.

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### **Cooperation with Other Bodies and International Organizations**

10. As the Treaty has been growing its significance as the specific international instrument responsible for the plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, its interfaces with related conventions and organizations have become especially important to ensure the Treaty's harmonious relationship with other instruments for effective development and implementation of coordinated activities. The direct collaboration with the CBD has been especially expanded through the implementation of the Joint Initiative between the Secretariats of the CBD and the ITPGRFA, including the organization of a tandem workshop for national focal points on the harmonious implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and the ITPGRFA.

11. In this context, the Governing Body has also recommended strengthening policy and operational collaboration with the CBD and the GCDT through the establishment of liaison officer positions with the two institutions for the biennium 2014-2015 since these two Organizations have particular importance to the Treaty. The liaison posts would facilitate to enhance cooperation and promote common objectives with these institutions in relevant areas of the Treaty implementation, taking also into account the existing cooperation with the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and other units.

### **Third Project Cycle of the Benefit-sharing Fund**

12. The Benefit-sharing Fund is a key operational mechanism of the Treaty. It holds financial resources for benefit-sharing that are under the direct control of the Governing Body of the Treaty, and invests in high impact projects supporting smallholder farmers in developing countries who conserve and sustainably use plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

13. Following the announcement made at the Fifth Session of the Governing Body, the Bureau of the Governing Body opened the Third Call for Proposals under the Benefit-sharing Fund on 7 March 2014 with a target of approving, by the end of 2014, a global project portfolio of more than USD10 million.

14. Within the three agreed priorities of the Benefit-sharing Fund: (i) managing and conserving plant genetic resources on farm; (ii) sustainable use of plant genetic resources; and (iii) information exchange, technology transfer and capacity-building, the thematic focus of the Third Call for Proposals is helping to ensure sustainable food security by assisting farmers to adapt to climate change through a targeted set of high impact activities on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. The Third Call for Proposals includes a new funding window that focuses on the co-development and transfer of technologies and related information and capacity building.