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Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda

**INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

SECOND SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, Italy, 29 October – 2 November 2007

**INFORMATION DOCUMENT ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE
SUPPORTING COMPONENTS OF THE TREATY**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Paras.</i>
I. Introduction	1-3
II. The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	4-14
III. Ex Situ Collections of Plant Genetic Resources for Food And Agriculture held by the International Agricultural Research Centres of The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and other International Institutions	15-18
IV. International Plant Genetic Resources Networks	19-21
V. The Global Information System on PGRFA	22
<i>State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>	23-26

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Governing Body decided at its First Session, that Cooperation between the Governing Body and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture should, as appropriate, facilitate the implementation of the supporting components of the Treaty, in particular, the *Global Plan of Action*.¹ The modalities of such cooperation are discussed under agenda item 15. This information document is prepared in support of such discussion.

2. Part V of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture describes its supporting components as follows:

- The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Articles 14 and 17);
- *Ex Situ* Collections of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture held by the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCS) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and other International Institutions (CGIAR) (Article 15);
- International Plant Genetic Resources Networks (Article 16);
- Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Article 17);
- *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Article 17.3).

3. For each of the supporting components listed, this document provides a brief review of most relevant activities undertaken by FAO during the current biennium (2006-07)², and where relevant, the guidance received from the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture for further implementation. Specific activities on some supporting components carried out by other organizations are reported by the organizations themselves, and a cross-reference will be provided in the relevant section of this document.

II. THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

4. The Global Plan of Action is a supporting component of the International Treaty and its twenty priority activity areas have been agreed by the Governing Body of the Treaty as the reference for the establishment of initial priorities of its Funding Strategy.³ It provides an operational framework for the development of national programmes on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and for regional and international cooperation.

5. The implementation of the Global Plan of Action is overseen by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The Commission at its Eleventh Session in June 2007, reviewed follow-up work in support to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. In

¹ Idem. Para 15.

² An analysis of activities carried out during previous biennia, can be found in CGRFA/WG-PGR-3/05/2 Rev. 1

³ IT/GB-1/06/Report. Appendix F, Funding Strategy for the Implementation of The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Para.4.

relation to those activities supporting the sustainable use of plant genetic resources, the Commission confirmed the importance of strengthening capacity in plant breeding, including through a participatory approach, and strengthening capacities in biotechnologies as well as in seed systems, and initiatives such as the Global Partnership Initiative for Plant Breeding Capacity-Building (GIPB).⁴ In this context, it stressed the need for a balanced approach between the use of traditional and modern technologies, including biotechnologies for plant breeding and encouraged FAO to continue its work to strengthen seed systems at national, regional, and global levels.

6. The Commission stressed the critical importance of attracting financial resources to support development and implementation of all elements of the Global Plan of Action. It noted that the Global Crop Diversity Trust had been successful in mobilizing very considerable resources for activities related to *ex situ* collections; however, it emphasized the need for other contributions to support in situ conservation, on-farm management, and utilization,⁵ in particular.⁶

7. The Commission noted at its last session that the successful updating of the Global Plan of Action would contribute to the implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. A new updated version of the Global Plan of Action is expected for consideration by the thirteenth Session of the Commission, as foreseen in its Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPOW).⁷

8. Additional information is provided on two mechanisms by which FAO provides support to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action: the Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and the new approach for monitoring implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

1. *Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action*

9. In Resolution 1/2006, the Governing Body of the International Treaty requested the Commission to support the development of the Funding Strategy, in the context of its work in relation to the supporting components of the Treaty, including the Global Plan of Action and its Facilitating Mechanism.⁸ It further decided that information on the mandates, policies, eligibility criteria and procedures of funding bodies will be collected and maintained by the Secretariat of the International Treaty and made available to Contracting Parties through the website of the Treaty, and that the Facilitating Mechanism could complement this activity by collecting and providing information on relevant available funds from the Parties.⁹

10. In response to this request, a web-based information portal has been developed under the Facilitating Mechanism as a partnership between FAO, Bioversity International and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research. The portal, which is one of the four activities of the Facilitating Mechanism agreed by the Commission, was put online last 1st of June 2007, with the following URL www.globalplanofaction.org. It provides information on sources and availability of financial, technical and information resources, and related subjects. It includes a database of potential funding sources for projects, studies and training, research, meetings, etc., contributing to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The records of the database refer to single

⁴ GIPB web page <http://km.fao.org/gipb/>

⁵ Implementation of Article 6 of the International Treaty, *Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources* will be discussed under agenda item 13.

⁶ CGRFA-11/07/REPORT, para.33 to 36.

⁷ CGRFA-11/7/REPORT

⁸ IT/GB-1/06/Report. 17.

⁹ IT/GB-1/06/Report. *Appendix F*, para. 13.

donor programmes. Up to now, more than 300 searchable donor programmes have been compiled, with a summary about the donor institution (including bilateral and multilateral donors, development finance institutions, foundations, etc.) and the particular donor programme, the scope of funding of the respective programme (target subjects, target countries, target groups), the type of funding provided and information about eligibility and application.

11. Furthermore the portal serves as an access point to information related to the Global Plan of Action, and the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The portal is also a source of other information relevant to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including codes of conduct and guidelines, networks, germplasm-databases and key documents in the field of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.¹⁰

12. The Commission at its last session in June 2007 "welcomed the progress made in the development of the web portal of the Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. It encouraged countries to provide extrabudgetary resources to carry out the agreed activities, in particular for the further development of the web portal and assistance to stakeholders to develop project proposals."¹¹ Since then, further work has been carried out to increase the number of records available in its various databases, and to ensure availability of the Portal in three languages, English, French and Spanish.

2. *Monitoring the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action*

13. The Commission at its Eleventh Session expressed appreciation for the progress made in applying the new approach to monitor implementation of the Global Plan of Action, which is a participatory, country-driven and capacity-building process, based on agreed indicators. It recognized its positive role in strengthening partnerships among national stakeholders, raising awareness on the importance of plant genetic resources among policy makers, and its value as a tool for identifying gaps and defining priorities for future collaborative action.

14. Approximately 40 countries have finalized or are in the final steps of the establishment of their national information sharing mechanisms, 35 of which have prepared a country report on the state of plant genetic resources. Table 1 provides a summary of some key data available through the databases developed. Extra-budgetary needs to apply the new monitoring approach to all countries are estimated at USD\$ 20,000 per country. The Commission acknowledged the financial resources made available to carry out the monitoring in a total of 56 countries. The current unmet extra-budgetary needs for 80 further countries are USD\$ 1,600,000.¹² The Commission called upon donors to provide additional funding to allow the maximum number of developing countries to participate in this process.

¹⁰ The specific features and functioning of the web portal were presented during a side event at the last Session of the Commission, in June 2007.

¹¹ CGRFA-11/07/Report, para. 30.

¹² CGRFA-10/04/5, Follow-up to the recommendations of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its Working Group, regarding plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, paragraph 32.

Table 1. Indicative list of projects, cultivars and publications for which detailed information can be accessed from WIEWS and the National Mechanisms databases.

Country	Projects	Cultivars	Publications
Azerbaijan	259	1304	712
Bolivia	156	138	192
Cuba	1065	985	1120
Czech Republic	264	2772	520
Ecuador*	160	35	35
Egypt*	-	942	16
Fiji	32	-	85
Ghana*	334	83	317
India	1171	5240	4736
Kazakhstan	228	747	741
Kenya*	214	381	86
Laos*	28	166	23
Lebanon	229	1082	224
Jordan*	30	67	76
Oman*	8	35	37
Mali*	88	1890	92
Malaysia	734	1925	805
Pakistan*	33	448	-
Peru	246	309	581
Philippines	95	918	592
Papua New Guinea	39	-	21
Togo*	51	409	24
Thailand	115	954	1123
Uzbekistan	132	733	358
Vietnam	83	8634	83
Total	5794	30197	12599

(WIEWS, March 2007)

* Preliminary data

III. EX SITU COLLECTIONS OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE HELD BY THE INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTRES OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

15. In 1989, the Commission called for the development of the International Network of Ex Situ Collections under the Auspices of FAO, in line with Article 7.1a of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources.

16. Twelve International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) of the CGIAR signed agreements with FAO on 26 October 1994, placing accessions of PGRFA in the International Network. FAO has signed agreements with other international institutions such as the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE) and the International Coconut Genetic Resources Network (COGENT).

17. Ex situ collections held by IARCs and other international institutions are now a supporting component of the International Treaty. Article 15 calls upon them “to sign agreements with the Governing Body with regard to such ex situ collections.” “The Governing Body will also seek to establish agreements for the purposes stated in this Article with other relevant international institutions.”

18. The Parties to the Treaty at the First Session of the Governing Body also called on the Centres to sign agreements with the Governing Body to place the collections they hold in trust in order to place these collections in the framework of the Treaty. The signing ceremony with representatives of the eleven IARCs and other international organizations holding PGRFA was held at FAO in Rome last 16 October 2006. Consequently, the Annex 1 materials they hold will be distributed using the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA). Consideration of MTA to be used by IARCs for PGRFA not included in Annex 1 of the Treaty will be dealt with in agenda item 11.13

IV. INTERNATIONAL PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES NETWORKS

19. The International Treaty recognizes the contribution of international networks to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA in its Article 16, encouraging cooperation all relevant stakeholders so as to achieve as complete coverage as possible of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. The importance of such networks is also underlined by the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources (WG-PGR). During its Second Session in November 2003, the WG-PGR recommended that “case studies on successful networks should be made available to the Commission [...] to advance understanding of the characteristics of successful networks and to encourage greater collaboration”. A Background Study Paper was prepared¹⁴, which analyzed the characteristics of successful networks, by assessing the effectiveness of selected networks using criteria such as the degree to which the network is closed or open; network organization and leadership; funding mechanisms; network benefits and outputs; and network communications. Other criteria, in particular synergies among networks, were also considered. The study provided an overview of the factors that determine the success of a network and identified indicators that could be used to assess them.

¹³ See document IT/GB-2/07/13

¹⁴ Background Study Paper No. 16, *A Summary and Analysis of Existing International Plant Genetic Resources Networks*, by Electra Kalaugher and Bert Visser.

20. At its Tenth Regular Session, the Commission “considered the criteria for, and characteristics of, effective and efficient crop, regional and thematic networks, as well as the process initiated by the Secretariat regarding the further contribution of networks in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. It agreed that support for the functioning of effective networks, and strengthening of collaboration among networks, should be promoted, and that case studies on successful networks should be made available”.

21. Through the process of monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, 21 out of 25 countries reported that the participation in networks, on mutually agreed terms, is an important platform to bring benefits to the participants. Over 90% of the countries report the exchange of germplasm and of information as the two major benefits gained from their participation in PGRFA networks. Other very evident benefits were achieved through the exchange of technical expertise (81%); transfer of technology (76%); and, training for national programme scientists (76%). As per constraints which reportedly affect countries’ participation in PGRFA networks, the lack of financial resources was by large the main constraint reported, followed by the lack of agreements for benefit-sharing among potential partners and the lack of a clear return and network inefficiencies.

V. THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON PGRFA

22. Article 17.1 of the International Treaty states that “Contracting Parties shall cooperate to develop and strengthen a global information system to facilitate the exchange of information, based on existing information systems, on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, with the expectation that such exchange of information will contribute to the sharing of benefits by making information on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture available to all Contracting Parties [...] Based on notification by the Contracting Parties, early warning should be provided about hazards that threaten the efficient maintenance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, with a view to safeguarding the material.”

State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

23. Article 17.3 of the International Treaty states that “the Contracting Parties shall cooperate with the Commission [...] in its periodic reassessment of the state of the world’s plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in order to facilitate the updating of the rolling Global Plan of Action”. The first Report of the State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was prepared for the Fourth International Technical Conference, held in Leipzig, Germany in 1996, and was welcomed as the first comprehensive worldwide assessment of the status and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

24. The Commission is currently overseeing the preparation of the second Report of State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. During its last session the Commission noted that the Report should provide a concise and succinct assessment of the status and trends of these resources and be a high quality document, with regional and global analysis, to identify the most significant gaps and needs, in order to provide a sound basis for updating the rolling Global Plan of Action.

25. The Commission agreed that The State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources needed to be updated with the best data and information available, including country reports, information gathering processes and thematic studies, with the largest possible participation of countries, and should focus on changes occurred since 1996. The Commission stressed the importance for FAO

to receive data and information from developed and developing countries in a timely manner, for the preparation of the updated State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources. It stressed that mobilization of financial resources is paramount, to both enable full participation of developing countries and to strengthen their capacity. It recognised that FAO contributed, through its Regular Programme, to the preparation of the updated The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, and that additional extra-budgetary resources are urgently needed.

26. The Commission requested the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture at its fourth meeting in 2009, review and guide the finalization for the draft second The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, and recommended that FAO make available the draft updated State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources at the next Regular Session of the Commission in 2009, to consider its finalization.