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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

Third Session

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GENETIC DIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), at its Fourteenth Regular Session in April 2013, reaffirmed the importance of genetic resources for food and agriculture for coping with climate change and the need for raising awareness of their potential roles. At the same Session, the Commission adopted its Programme of Work on Climate Change and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture¹.

2. The recently released Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change² stressed that climate change is already having an impact on all aspects of food security, and this requires the pace of adaptation to speed up. Adaptation involves the increased use of the diversity present in genetic resources to cope with changes while at the same time, *inter alia*, sustain production, support the continuing provision of ecosystem services and maintain livelihoods.

3. As part of the Programme of Work, for 2014, the Commission agreed that its Working Groups will develop guidelines for the integration of genetic diversity considerations into climate change adaptation planning. The Secretariat of the Commission prepared the “*Draft guidelines to support the integration of genetic diversity into national climate change adaptation planning*” (draft guidelines), presented in document CGRFA/WG-FGR-3/14/Inf. 4, for consideration by the Working Group.

4. A national adaptation plan (NAP) process was established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and several countries have already embarked on the formulation of their NAP. This process encourages countries to advance from short-term and other individual adaptation experiences to comprehensive, medium- and long-term planning for adaptation. The NAP will be the primary statement of national adaptation needs and priorities. The draft guidelines could be used to complement the process by addressing the genetic resources dimension of adaptation planning.

II. DRAFT GUIDELINES

5. The draft guidelines presented in document CGRFA/WG-FGR-3/14/Inf. 4, were prepared building on, *inter alia*, previous work by the Commission on climate change, such as the Background Study Papers No. 53-57, 60, information obtained through a global survey on “*Lessons learned about the ways and means to conserve and use genetic diversity to build resilience to climate change in food and agriculture systems*” (conducted in 2013), and a workshop organized in April 2014, at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. They also make reference to the Global Plans of Action on genetic resources, when relevant.

6. The draft guidelines aim to:

- i. promote the use of genetic resources for food and agriculture in climate change adaptation and support their integration into national climate change adaptation planning.
- ii. support the genetic resources community and those involved in climate change adaptation, to identify and address the challenges and opportunities of genetic resources for food and agriculture in adaptation; and
- iii. support the participation of genetic resources stakeholders in the national climate change adaptation planning process.

¹ CGRFA-14/13/Report Appendix D

² The Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

7. The Working Group may wish to review the draft guidelines and recommend them for endorsement by the Commission.
8. The Working Group may further wish to recommend that the Commission:
 - i. Request FAO to publish and widely distribute the guidelines and raise its awareness among decision makers and all relevant stakeholders;
 - ii. Request its Secretary to officially transmit the guidelines to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
 - iii. Stress the need for technical and awareness-raising material, and requests FAO to develop such material in order to facilitate the implementation of the guidelines;
 - iv. Encourage its Members to implement the guidelines as part of their national adaptation planning;
 - v. Appeal to its Members to provide the necessary budgetary resources for further implementation of the Commission's Programme of Work on Climate Change and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.