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COUNCIL

Hundred and Fifty-third Session

Rome, 30 November - 4 December 2015

Developments in *Fora* of Importance for the Mandate of FAO

Executive Summary

In keeping with established practice, the Council is informed of developments in other *fora* of importance for FAO's mandate. Presentations will be made on the following topics at the 153rd Session of Council:

- 1) Outcomes of the 3rd Meeting of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly – focusing on the proposal for the development of *Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management* (Rome, 22-24 June 2015)
- 2) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Sustainable Development Goals
- 3) Outcomes of the 20th Anniversary Celebrations of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Vigo, Spain, 7-8 October 2015)
- 4) International Years:
 - a) International Year of Soils 2015
 - b) International Year of Pulses 2016
- 5) Outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting on Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (Expo Milano, 14-16 October 2015)
- 6) Outcomes of the 6th Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Rome, 5-9 October 2015)

Suggested action by the Council

The above topics are presented to the 153rd Session of the Council for information only.

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I. Outcomes of the 3rd Meeting of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly – focusing on the proposal for the development of *Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management* (Rome, 22-24 June 2015)

1. The 3rd Meeting of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) Plenary Assembly was held in Rome from 22 to 24 June 2015. The Assembly considered the draft Concept Note on “Sustainable Management of Soil Resources” developed by the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) in April 2015 and presented by the Secretariat in response to the request by the 24th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) (Rome, 29 September-3 October 2014).
2. The ITPS had stressed that the revised World Soil Charter (WSC), as endorsed by the 39th FAO Conference in June 2015, contained principles and guidelines for action that were broad and generic in nature and recognized that the WSC should be complemented by more specific and technical guidelines for the sustainable management of soil resources. Further to the guidance provided by the ITPS, the Concept Note recommended the development of *Voluntary Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Soil Resources*.
3. The Assembly welcomed the Concept Note and tasked the ITPS and the Secretariat to improve the document by incorporating the comments provided by partners and to submit it for an email consultation. Subsequently, the 4th ITPS working session in September 2015, revised the Concept Note accordingly and the final version was published online at:

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/soils/Concept_Note_VGSSM.pdf

II. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Sustainable Development Goals

4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, was approved at the UN Post-2015 Summit which took place from 25 to 27 September 2015 at UN Headquarters in New York.
5. The 2030 Agenda is universal in scope, applying to both developing and developed countries, and integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic manner. The Director-General represented FAO at the Summit, during which FAO’s contribution to the 2030 Agenda was highlighted and the importance of eradicating hunger and malnutrition as a prerequisite for achieving other SDGs was underlined. A Rome-based Agencies (RBA) joint side event further highlighted the cost-effectiveness of fighting hunger by combining social protection with pro-poor investments.
6. A preliminary mapping of FAO’s Strategic Objectives (SOs) and the SDGs revealed a close alignment between the two, which in turn underscored the potential for FAO to substantially contribute to the implementation of the new development framework by: providing evidence base and comprehensive policy advice; implementing programmes; supporting the monitoring of progress; developing capacities; strengthening the institutional environment; and building partnerships and alliances. The close relation between the SOs and the SDGs is the result of proactive and continuous engagement by FAO in the Post-2015 process at all levels, capitalizing on the comprehensive vision of the Organization’s reviewed Strategic Framework.
7. It is expected that the next two years will essentially be a transition phase focusing on national efforts to prioritize goals and targets, developing plans and partnerships and mobilizing financial and non-financial means of implementation. The Decentralized Offices are gearing to maximize their effectiveness in supporting countries in the implementation of the SDGs and FAO is also fully engaged with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) in developing a monitoring framework and selecting SDG indicators.

III. Outcomes of the 20th Anniversary Celebrations of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Vigo, Spain, 7-8 October 2015)

8. Throughout 2015, FAO organized a number of activities and events highlighting the 20th Anniversary of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which culminated in the high-level 1st Annual International Fisheries Stakeholders Forum held in Vigo, Spain, from 7 to 8 October 2015, jointly organized with the Government of Spain, the regional government of Galicia and Conxemar, the Spanish Association of Wholesalers, Importers, Manufacturers and Exporters of Fish products and Aquaculture. The Forum was attended by numerous Ministers, as well as the EU Commissioner, together with policymakers, industry representatives and civil society. FAO was represented by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Assistant Director-General, Arni Mathiesen, and the Director-General sent a video message to the Forum.

9. The Forum focused on the continued relevance and importance of the Code of Conduct, the Blue Growth Initiative, trends in industry and trade, aquaculture development, fisheries management and fishing rights, IUU fishing, livelihoods, sustainability and certification.

10. The main outcomes of the 20th Anniversary Celebrations included:

- a) an increased awareness among policymakers, industry and society at large of the importance of the Code in meeting future challenges, as well as the role of the Blue Growth Initiative in achieving sustainability, including the establishment of a Blue Growth Industry Forum to operate in cooperation with FAO;
- b) the realization of the need for increased dialogue and collaboration between FAO and the private sector through Blue Growth and GLOBEFISH; and
- c) an increased awareness of the role of social issues and how FAO could effectively integrate sustainable livelihoods for fish workers in developing countries into its programme of work.

IV. International Years:

A. International Year of Soils 2015

11. On 20 December 2013, the 68th United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 68/232 thereby declaring 2015 as the International Year of Soils (IYS), and establishing 5 December as the World Soil Day. During 2015, a number of advocacy activities, regional meetings, national discussions and international seminars were organized by FAO in recognition of the economic and social significance of good land and soils management, particularly its contribution to biodiversity, sustainable food production, nutrition, combating and adapting to climate change and water availability. Furthermore, also through the Global Soil Partnership, more than 240 international, regional and national meetings on soils were held.

12. Soils have been positioned on the global agenda, with four out of the 17 SDGs making reference to soils. At the 39th FAO Conference in June 2015, the new World Soil Charter was endorsed by FAO Members, and the two Global Ambassadors for the IYS, Professor Tekalign Mamo and Professor Claire Chenu, were officially appointed. Their contributions throughout 2015 have been key to raising awareness for soils.

13. The main outcomes and outputs of the IYS, as well as the Status of the World Soil Resources, have been presented in the framework of an event organized by the IYS Steering Committee on the eve of the World Soil Day, thus concluding a successful International Year of Soils.

B. International Year of Pulses 2016

14. Following Conference Resolution 6/2013 adopted by the 38th FAO Conference in June 2013, the UN General Assembly at its 68th Session declared 2016 as the International Year of Pulses (IYP), which was subsequently launched on 10 November 2015 at FAO Headquarters.

15. An International Steering Committee was set up in March 2015 to oversee and guide the implementation of the international year. The main objective of the IYP is to raise awareness for the contribution of pulses to food security and nutrition, with the following outcomes and outputs foreseen during the course of the year:

a) Outcomes:

- i. Increased knowledge and evidence of pulses, their attributes and their ability to provide solutions to health, trade and environmental sustainability issues; and
- ii. Strengthened national, regional and local capacities to formulate and implement policies and programmes to improve nutritional status.

b) Outputs:

- i. Regional and Global campaigns/activities to raise awareness of the significant nutritional and health advantages of pulses;
- ii. Data emanating from the Food Composition Database on Pulses to be utilized in the context of the IYP to promote pulses, to develop new recipes or add value to existing recipes highlighting their nutrient contents; as well as to advise Members on breeding programmes for pulses in order to increase the nutrient contents of these crops, including within the context of agricultural projects, programmes and policies; and
- iii. Outreach and advocacy activities on the significant role of pulses.

16. An IYP Action Plan (AP) has been created and provides information on IYP activities and events to be implemented during 2016.

V. Outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting on Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (Expo Milano, 14-16 October 2015)

17. The Ministerial Meeting, jointly organized by the Government of Italy, the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and FAO, was held from 14 to 16 October 2015 on the margins of MILAN EXPO 2015.

18. The Ministerial Meeting provided an important opportunity to exchange experiences in the areas of food security and nutrition, particularly in light of the challenges facing SIDS due to the adverse impacts of climate change. The Ministerial Declaration reiterated the call to FAO to facilitate a biennial forum on food and nutrition security in the SIDS in order to develop an action programme to address food and nutrition challenges facing those countries, in line with paragraph 61 of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A.) Pathway, and to engage governments, SIDS technical experts and other relevant stakeholders in this process.

19. During the meeting, which saw the participation of over 25 ministers, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy pledged the Italian Government's voluntary contribution of USD 2.0 Million dollars to the recently launched FAO Climate Change Trust Fund for Small Island Developing States.

20. Following the Ministerial Meeting, an indicative Road Map has been rolled out for the implementation of the action programme. The Road Map proposes a consultative process, to take place over the course of the FAO Regional Conferences during 2016, with the final outcomes to be presented on the margins of the 40th FAO Conference in June 2017.

VI. Outcomes of the 6th Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Rome, 5-9 October 2015)

21. The 6th Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Treaty¹) (Rome, 5-9 October 2015), adopted its programme of work for the 2016-17 biennium aimed at further improving the implementation and development of the Treaty. The effective implementation of the Treaty, in synergy with relevant instruments such as the Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity, was identified as a priority for the Treaty's Contracting Parties, and the new programme of work will continue addressing this priority in the coming biennium.
22. During the 6th Session, the Governing Body extended the mandate of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (the Working Group), which will continue to develop a range of measures to secure increased user-based payments and income to the Treaty's Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) in a sustainable and foreseeable long term manner, as well as to provide additional measures to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System. The Governing Body also agreed to reconvene the *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on the Funding Strategy, which will consider the link between increased user-based payments and proposals to develop a mechanism of contribution by Contracting Parties.
23. Recalling the important interlinkages between the Global Information System set out in Article 17 of the Treaty (GLIS) and the Multilateral System, the Governing Body also adopted the Vision and the Programme of Work for the GLIS on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA). The GLIS will facilitate the documentation and dissemination of PGRFA available in the Multilateral System, as well as its associated information, in order to facilitate research, plant breeding and training.
24. The Governing Body also adopted the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of PGRFA 2016-19, and a resolution on the implementation of Article 9 of the Treaty regarding Farmers' Rights, which invites Contracting Parties to make efforts to undertake various measures to advance the implementation of Farmers' Rights and requires the Secretary of the Treaty to facilitate such initiatives upon request. Finally, the Governing Body also adopted a resolution on collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity and, for the first time, a resolution with policy guidance for the Global Crop Diversity Trust in accordance with the Trust's constitution and its Relationship Agreement with the Governing Body.

¹ <http://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0510e/i0510e.pdf>