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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

SECRETARIAT NOTE

Introduction

1. In 2007, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) requested that FAO prepare *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (SoW-FGR)*¹ and established, in 2009, an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (ITWG-FGR) to guide the preparation of this report. In 2011, the CGRFA also requested FAO to prepare a synthesis paper on priority areas for action based on the information gathered for the SoW-FGR and that the ITWG-FGR review the paper. In April 2013, the CGRFA agreed the identified priority areas as *the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (GPA-FGR)*² and in June 2013, the FAO Conference adopted the document³.

2. The GPA-FGR identifies four priority areas for action: (1) improving the availability of, and access to, information regarding FGR; (2) conservation of FGR (*in situ* and *ex situ*); (3) sustainable use, development and management of FGR; and (4) policies, institutions and capacity building. Under these areas, the GPA-FGR includes a total of 27 strategic priorities for action at the national, regional and international levels. The relative priority of each strategic priority and associated actions may differ significantly in various countries and regions. The GPA-FGR is a voluntary and non-binding document that can be updated by the CGRFA. The implementation of the GPA-FGR will strengthen sustainable management of forests and contribute towards the post-2015 development agenda and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

¹ SoW-FGR. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3825e.pdf>

² GPA-FGR. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3849e.pdf>

³ C 2013/REP, paragraph 77. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/028/mh093e.pdf>

3. Activities relating to FGR are an integral part of the FAO's work in forestry and are regularly reported to the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the Regional Forestry Commissions. At its 22nd Session in June 2014, COFO welcomed the SoW-FGR and the GPA-FGR, and acknowledged the importance of FAO's work in this area. COFO recommended that FAO support the implementation of the GPA-FGR, finalize the draft strategy for the implementation of the GPA-FGR for review by the CGRFA, encourage continued cooperation in addressing the global priorities of the GPA-FGR, and support countries as appropriate to address the strategic priorities of the GPA-FGR. This document presents information on follow-up to the GPA-FGR since the 22nd Session of COFO.

Follow-up to the Global Plan of Action

4. At its 3rd Session in July 2014, the ITWG-FGR considered the draft implementation strategy for the GPA-FGR and made several recommendations⁴. The ITWG-FGR recommended that FAO encourage its Members to develop national plans of action for the conservation, sustainable use and development of FGR. It also stressed the need to create linkages between these national plans and National Forest Programmes, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and other relevant planning processes.

5. At its 15th Session in January 2015, the CGRFA further considered and adopted the draft implementation strategy⁵. The implementation strategy includes seven areas for action: (1) advocacy and international awareness on FGR; (2) development and support of relevant global and regional networks; (3) supporting countries in the development of national and regional strategies for the implementation of the GPA-FGR; (4) supporting countries in securing adequate and sustainable funding for the implementation of the GPA-FGR; (5) development of international technical standards for FGR and support to implement them; (6) funding strategy for the implementation of the GPA-FGR; and (7) monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the GPA-FGR and the status and trends of FGR. The CGRFA stressed that the strategy is fundamental for achieving the goals of the GPA-FGR and called for the implementation of the strategy in coordination with COFO and relevant international organizations.

6. FAO has continued cooperation with relevant partners, such as Bioversity International and the World Agroforestry Centre, in addressing the global priorities of the GPA-FGR. This cooperation was crucial for the preparation of the SoW-FGR and related thematic studies, and it will also be crucial for implementation of the GPA-FGR at the international level. In December 2014, the results of the earlier collaboration were published in a special issue of *Forest Ecology and Management*⁶. The global reviews on various issues related to FGR provide valuable information for the implementation of the GPA-FGR in addition to the SoW-FGR. FAO is also strengthening its collaboration on FGR with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other relevant members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), as well as various international and regional organizations.

7. Regional coordination is necessary for effective implementation of regional and national priorities of the GPA-FGR as the distribution ranges of forest trees and their genetic resources typically extend beyond individual countries. Regional networks on FGR play a crucial role for this purpose by providing a platform for countries to share experiences, exchange information and develop collaborative actions. In September 2014, the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutes (APAFRI) and Bioversity International organized, with technical inputs from FAO, a regional workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for the national coordinators of the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN). The workshop prepared a strategy for regional collaboration to implement the GPA-FGR. In October 2014, Bioversity International organized a similar workshop in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia in collaboration with the Latin America Forest Genetic Resources Network (LAFORGEN), and with financial and technical support from Spain. FAO and its partners are planning to organize similar

⁴ CGRFA/WG-FGR-3/14/Report, paragraphs 13-15. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml401e.pdf>

⁵ CGRFA-15/15/Report, Appendix E. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm660e.pdf>

⁶ Global Forest Genetic Resources : Taking Stock (special issue of *Forest Ecology and Management*) (open access). <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/03781127/333>

planning workshops in other regions, subject to the availability of financial resources. In Europe, FAO will continue its long-lasting collaboration with the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) which has already agreed to contribute to the implementation of the GPA-FGR during its Phase V (2015-2019).

8. FAO has also contributed to the work of regional networks dedicated to combat invasive species affecting FGR. These networks aim to facilitate sharing of information and mobilizing resources, raising awareness and bringing together experts, institutions and other stakeholders concerned with forest invasive species. In November 2014, FAO organized, in collaboration with the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, a regional seminar in Beijing, China for the national focal points of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN). FAO and its partners intend to rejuvenate the Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa (FISNA), the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) and Red de Países del Cono Sur sobre Especies Exóticas Invasoras a Ecosistemas Forestales which includes the South Cone countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) and Bolivia. Furthermore, FAO organized a regional seminar in Budapest, Hungary in June 2015 for European and Central Asian countries to promote the implementation of the phytosanitary standards in forestry. As a follow-up to this meeting, FAO is planning, in collaboration with its partners, to establish a network on forest invasive species for Europe and Central Asia. In addition, FAO and its partners are considering initiating a similar network in the Central American and Caribbean region.

9. Bioversity International organized, with technical inputs from FAO, a side event on the GPA-FGR during the IUFRO World Congress, held in Salt Lake City, USA in October 2014. In May 2015, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Institute for Forests (EMBRAPA Florestas) and FAO organized an International Symposium on Forest Biotechnology for Smallholders in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil. FAO will continue, together with its partners, contributing to this type of events to facilitate sharing of information and raising awareness on the conservation, sustainable use and development of FGR, subject to the availability of financial resources.

10. FAO is continuing to explore the interest of various donors to support countries in implementing the GPA-FGR. In collaboration with selected countries and partner organizations, FAO has developed and submitted project proposals to donors and is currently awaiting responses. Countries can also seek financial support for relevant projects through the decentralized FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP).

Points for consideration

11. The Commission may wish to:

- recommend that countries take action, as appropriate, to implement the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources;
- recommend that countries continue to support, as appropriate, the regional networks on FGR and forest invasive species, and contribute to the activities of these networks to strengthen regional collaboration in these areas.

12. The Commissions may wish to recommend that FAO:

- continue to support implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources.