



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



The International Treaty
**ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Kigali, Rwanda, 30 October – 3 November 2017

Report of the Chairperson

Executive Summary

At its Sixth Session, the Governing Body elected Mr Muhamad Sabran as the Chairperson of the Seventh Session of the Governing Body, in accordance with Rule II of the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Body. In this document, the Chairperson reports on some of his activities, certain actions taken by the Bureau, as well as on significant developments affecting the International Treaty since the Sixth Session of the Governing Body.

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to take note of the Chairperson's Report.

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I. Introduction

1. On behalf of the Bureau and the Governing Body, I would like, first, to express our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Rwanda for hosting this session of the Governing Body, being the first time in sub-Saharan Africa, and generously providing us with the excellent facilities and a conducive environment necessary for its success.
2. The opening of the Seventh Session offers a framework for a collective action and constructive exchange on the International Treaty, and an evaluation of progress on implementation of its extensive programme of work. It also provides an opportunity to review implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Governing Body in the exercise of its mandate, with a special emphasis on what has been achieved during the past two years.
3. I would like to underline that it has been a very challenging biennium for the Treaty and the Bureau of the Seventh Session, due to a number of reasons and events.¹ The International Treaty is going through a phase of real enhancement and transformation, entailing both opportunities and significant risks, which touch upon its main systems, its text, and also the Administration of the Secretariat. In this respect, I would like to express my appreciation to the Vice-Chairpersons of the Seventh Session for their constant support and the good spirit of collaboration witnessed during the intersessional period and the preparations for this Session. I would also like to thank the interim Secretary, Mr Kent Nnadozie, for his dedication and good work, and the former Secretary, Mr Shakeel Bhatti, for serving with me for just a few months before his resignation last year. I appreciated his professionalism and hard work for a decade to build the architecture of the International Treaty, which allow us to look with optimism to the future of the Treaty. I also wish to extend my appreciation and gratitude to the staff of the Secretariat, who have continued to perform despite the heavy workload and very challenging environment.
4. The theme of this Session, "the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Role of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture", will allow us to highlight the contribution of plant genetic resources to this action plan for the benefit of people, the planet and the prosperity of present and future generations.
5. This report contains an overview of the collective work of the Bureau, and refers to the major activities related to the preparations for this Session and the activities delegated to the Bureau by the Sixth Session of the Governing Body, as well as my activities as Chairperson of the Seventh Session. It also provides an update of some key partnerships and highlights important considerations related to implementation of the International Treaty, as well as current obstacles and challenges.

II. Major work tracks

6. The primary task assigned to the Bureau is the preparation of the Sessions of the Governing Body. The Bureau of the Seventh Session met twice to prepare the Provisional Agenda and to advise the Secretary on preparation of the documentation for this Session. The Bureau also worked through electronic means and telephone conferencing, to carry out its tasks. During this biennium, the Vice-Chairpersons facilitated the nomination of experts representing the seven regions in the intersessional processes, and have closely followed the progress made in preparation for the technical consultations and other meetings.

¹ The Bureau elected at the Sixth Session comprised myself as Chairperson, and six Vice-Chairpersons: Mr Javad Mozafari (Near East Region), Mr Michel Ryan (South West Pacific), Mr Antonio Sa Ricarte (Latin America and Caribbean), Ms Felicitas Katepa-Mupondwa (North America), Ms Svanhild-Isabelle Batta Torheim (Europe), and Mr Francis Leku Azenaku (Africa). During the biennium, Mr Michel Ryan was replaced by Ms Cathrine Stephenson. Furthermore, after the sad passing away of Mr Francis Leku Azenaku, the Government of Cameroon nominated Mr Médi MOUNGUI to serve in the Bureau as Vice Chair for Africa region.

7. At the Sixth Session, the Governing Body assigned other important tasks to the Bureau. Regarding the launch of the fourth Call for Proposals under the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF). I am very pleased to report that significant progress has been made, at the time of preparation of this report, with the aim of approving the call by the Seventh Session. Such approval will facilitate the use of funds already committed or pledged by the donors for the benefit of farmers and plant breeders. I would like to thank all the donors that have already contributed to the Benefit-sharing Fund, and I strongly encourage other governments and the private sector to join the ongoing efforts, as soon as possible, in order to keep the Fund healthy and fully functional. At the same time, I am very glad to see that the projects approved under the Third Cycle are progressing smoothly.

8. The Sixth Session also requested that the Bureau participate in preparing the Educational Module on Farmers' Rights, and we did so at our first meeting with the endorsement of the outline and structure of the manual. Some Bureau members individually contributed to review the module. At the time of the preparation of this report, the module has been sent for printing.

9. At its first meeting, the Bureau provided advice to the Secretary on the further development of the Multi-Year Programme of Work for the International Treaty (MYPOW), as requested by the Sixth Session of the Governing Body. The Secretariat subsequently initiated a consultation process to obtain inputs from Contracting Parties and other stakeholders for the update and further development of the MYPOW, and kept the Bureau informed on the progress. The resulting document, which will now be considered by the Governing Body at this Session, also contains a work plan with targets, milestones, activities and estimated costs.

10. Despite the efforts and progress made in the area of communication and outreach, the Bureau felt that there was still a lack of overall framework that provides the necessary guidance, direction and resources in this regard. During its two meetings, the Bureau emphasized the need to increase communication efforts under the International Treaty and, at the second meeting, requested the Secretary to prepare a draft Communication Strategy, and the outline of a work plan for the 2018/19 biennium. The draft Communication Strategy is attached to the Secretary's report for your consideration.

III. Selection of the Secretary of the Governing Body and the Establishment of Long-term Procedures for the Selection of the Secretary

11. Following the resignation of the former Secretary, Mr Shakeel Bhatti, who had served in that position for almost a decade, I was consulted by the FAO Management regarding the proposal to appoint Mr Kent Nnadozie, who had previously served in the Secretariat as senior officer, as Secretary *ad interim*.

12. The Bureau has also been involved in the selection process of the new Secretary. Following the development of *ad hoc* procedures, two members of the Bureau – including myself – participated in the interview panel, and in the preparation of a short list of candidates sent to the Director-General of FAO for his consideration. I am pleased to inform you that Mr Kent Nnadozie was selected among the short list of candidates and proposed by the Director-General to the Seventh Session of the Governing Body for approval as the new Secretary of the Governing Body.

13. At its second meeting in March 2017, the Bureau held consultations with the Independent Chairperson of the Council of FAO and the FAO Secretariat, on the definition of procedures for the appointment of the Secretary in future. The Bureau noted that it would be useful for the FAO Secretariat and the Bureau to prepare a paper for the Seventh Session containing a comprehensive set of proposals on future procedures, including conditions for renewal of the appointment.

IV. Partnerships and collaboration

14. At its first meeting, the Bureau recommended that the Secretariat should continue to strengthen cooperation with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), especially in facilitating national implementation of the Nagoya Protocol in a mutually supportive manner with the International Treaty. The Bureau also requested the Treaty Secretariat to participate actively in the UN Biodiversity Conference, in Cancun Mexico, comprising the thirteenth Conference of the Parties of the CBD and the second Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. In the context of close collaboration, I attended the first meeting of the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI), to give visibility to the mandate and role of the International Treaty.

15. As requested by the Governing Body, the Bureau discussed and developed elements of advice for the Global Environment Facility (GEF), concerning funding of the objectives and priorities of the International Treaty. The note, included in the documentation of the Biodiversity Conference in Cancun under the relevant agenda item, contained additional background information on the International Treaty and an explanation of its contribution to the Aichi Targets. It included concrete references to the GEF-6 programmes, particularly number 7 on biodiversity and number 8 regarding mutually supportive implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and the International Treaty. Among other recommendations, the note proposed a more active role for the International Treaty's national focal points in GEF national projects and the possible participation of the Treaty Secretariat in an international project.²

16. With reference to Resolution 3/2013, during this biennium, the Global Crop Diversity Trust (GCDDT) brought to the attention of the Bureau that four candidates were nominated by the Governing Body in 2013 to serve on the Executive Board for a three-year period (2014-2016), and that, according to the Constitution of the Trust, the members can serve for a second term, but have to be reappointed. Three of the members appointed in 2013 by the Governing Body confirmed their wish to accept a second term and were so reappointed. The Bureau further agreed on the appointment of Mr Marcio de Miranda Santos as the replacement of Mr Mauricio Lopes.

17. I participated in three meetings of the Executive Board of the Global Crop Diversity Trust in 2015, 2016 and 2017, in Rome, Addis Ababa and Los Banos, respectively. In addition, I had the opportunity to represent the International Treaty at the Pledging Conference organized by the GCDDT in Washington in 2016.

18. Regarding other Biodiversity-related Conventions, I participated, together with five Vice-Chairpersons of the Seventh Session, in the *Workshop on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions*, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in February 2016, where a few interesting projects and initiatives were identified in the area of information knowledge and management.³

19. In October 2016, I co-moderated the Joint Symposium on possible interrelations between the International Treaty and the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), together with the Vice-President of UPOV, held at the UPOV Headquarters in Geneva.

20. In December 2016, FAO transferred the hosting of the Secretariat to the organization's new Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water Department (CB), together with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA). It is my hope and expectation that this will give more visibility and attention to the work of FAO on biodiversity, and I anticipate that it will generate programmatic synergies with the Commission.

² Available in IT/GB-7/17/Inf. 15

³ The report is available at UNEP/CBD/BRC/WS/2016/1/2, <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/biodiv/brcws-2016-01/official/brcws2016-01-02-en.doc>

21. During this biennium, I participated in several other intersessional committees of the International Treaty, focusing on various topics ranging from sustainable use and technology transfer to the enhancement process of the Multilateral System and celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity in 2016.

V. Other major developments and overall Treaty implementation

22. It is imperative for the International Treaty to survive and flourish in order to remain the primary forum where Contracting Parties can coordinate and better support the Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) community, in particular farmers and plant breeders.

23. Under the leadership of Indonesia and Norway, I was honoured to participate in the Global Consultation on Farmers' Rights held in Bali, Indonesia, in 2016. I consider that the further development of Article 9 is necessary to support countries in domestic implementation, and that both the Report of the Consultation and the options included in the proposals of the Co-Chairs of the Global Consultation offer an excellent basis for the next steps.⁴

24. I would also like to highlight the close relationship of the International Treaty with the Government of Norway regarding the Svalbard Global Seed Vault – a safety deposit of seeds and other material that holds more than 930,000 accessions from worldwide collections. In February 2017, I participated in the meeting of the International Advisory Board of the Seed Vault. At the request of the Government of Norway, additional background information has been made available for your consideration under the Agenda Item on Cooperation with International Instruments and Organizations.⁵

25. Furthermore, I would like to thank the breeders and the representative of the private sector whose views and inputs have facilitated an understanding of their operations, the challenges in the use of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA), and possible incentives that an enhanced Multilateral System could offer them. I strongly encourage them to continue to engage actively with all the relevant processes of the Treaty for achievement of the mutual interest of all stakeholders.

26. In this context, allow me to make a reference to the proposal for an amendment of the International Treaty, which has been submitted by the Government of Switzerland. Following this proposal, the Bureau decided to modify the Agenda to include a new item for the consideration of the Governing Body. Whatever enhancements we agree to in order to strengthen the International Treaty, we must strive to be coherent with other international instruments, and respond to the needs of the PGRFA community in a fair and equitable manner.

VI. Conclusion

27. Given the number of issues before us, the current Session of the Governing Body presents a great opportunity to take the Treaty to the next phase of its development and implementation.

28. As I conclude, I would like to reaffirm the fact that the International Treaty makes valuable contributions to both the Sustainable Development Goals and the Aichi Targets, and that it is relevant for the monitoring of progress under both processes. I am of the view that the Governing Body should further define the way in which it wishes the Secretary, the Bureau, Contracting Parties and other

⁴See documents IT/GB-7/17/17 and IT/GB-7/17/Circ.1

⁵ See document IT/GB-7/17/9 Add.1

relevant stakeholders to follow up on these. The item on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an excellent opportunity to discuss this.

29. In closing this report, I would like to quote the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Harold MacMillan, who in one important address to Parliament said: "We have to consider the state of the world as it is today and will be tomorrow, and not in outdated terms of a vanished past". I think that at this Session, when considering the proposals in front of us, what has been achieved so far and what needs to be done, we have to picture the International Treaty as the legal instrument and forum that makes us all stronger to fight genetic erosion, and to improve conservation and the sustainable use of our crop resources for improved livelihoods and global food security.