



The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



E

Item 15 of the Draft Provisional Agenda

FOURTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Bali, Indonesia, 14 - 18 March 2011

REPORT ON FAO ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE SUPPORTING COMPONENTS OF THE TREATY

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The supporting components of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture are 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);
- *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Article 17.3).

2. This document provides a brief review of the most relevant activities undertaken for these supporting components during the current biennium (2010-11) and where relevant, indicates the guidance received from the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture for further implementation.

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

3. The *Global Plan of Action* is one of the supporting components of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) refers to (Article 14) and as a basis for its Funding Strategy (Article 17). Since its adoption in 1996, the rolling Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (*Global Plan of Action*) has been a framework, guide and catalyst for action on plant genetic resources at the community, national, regional and international levels. As a 'rolling' plan its needs to be reviewed 'to deal with progress made at national, regional and international levels in implementation, elaboration, and adjustment as appropriate, of the Plan, thus making as recommended in Agenda 21.'¹

4. The implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* is overseen by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission). At its Eleventh Regular Session, the Commission agreed that the updated *Global Plan of Action* would be considered at its Thirteenth Regular Session. The Commission requested that FAO submit to its Twelfth Regular Session a proposed plan for the process of updating the *Global Plan of Action*, and requested its Working Group to consider elements of such a plan.²

5. The need for updating the *Global Plan of Action* has also been stressed by the Governing Body of the International Treaty. The Governing Body, at its First Session, defined as initial priorities of its Funding Strategy, the priority activity areas of the rolling *Global Plan of Action*,

¹ Report of the International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, ITCPR/96/REP, paragraph 21

² CGRFA-11/07/Report, paragraphs 41 and 43

for further development by the Governing Body. At its Second Session, in identifying the priorities for the use of resources under its direct control, the Governing Body focused, within the priority areas of the *Global Plan of Action*, on achieving benefits “in the pressing priority areas, identified for a limited period of time.” Annex 1 to the Funding Strategy also states that “the next iteration of the rolling *Global Plan of Action* will be important in the identification of future priorities.” The Governing Body, at its Third Session, reiterated the importance of the *Global Plan of Action* and invited the Commission, in the revision of the *Global Plan of Action*, to take into account specific issues of relevance to the International Treaty and to adequately reflect the provisions of the Treaty in the *Global Plan of Action*.

Updating the *Global Plan of Action*

6. Since the Third Session of the Governing Body, the Commission endorsed, at its Twelfth Regular Session, *The Second Report on the State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (SoWPGR-2)*³ and considered updating the *Global Plan of Action*. The Commission agreed to update it in line with the Strategic Plan 2010-2017 for the implementation of the Multi-Year Programme of Work. It requested FAO to prepare the updated *Global Plan of Action* based primarily on the SoWPGR-2, and in particular, on the identified gaps and needs, taking into account further contributions from Governments, as well as inputs received from regional meetings and consultations. It further decided that the updated *Global Plan of Action* would be considered at its Thirteenth Regular Session in 2011.⁴

7. The Commission also noted the importance of updating the *Global Plan of Action* in the light of the fact that it is a supporting component of the International Treaty and that the updated *Global Plan of Action* will be important in the identification of future priorities of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty. It recommended that the updated *Global Plan of Action* be focused, so as to assist priority setting, including identifying priorities for the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty. It requested its Secretary to coordinate with the Secretary of the International Treaty in the updating process, to ensure that specific issues of relevance to the International Treaty are taken into account. It also requested its Secretary to organize with the Secretary of the International Treaty a joint meeting of the Bureaus of the Commission and of the International Treaty to review a first draft of the updated *Global Plan of Action*, prior to its Thirteenth Regular Session. The Commission also requested its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources to review the draft updated *Global Plan of Action* at its Fifth Session as described in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: UPDATING THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION:
PROCESSES REQUIRED⁵**

Time Frame	Process
CGRFA-12 2009	<p><i>PRESENTATION OF THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES</i></p> <p>UPDATING THE <i>GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for the process of updating <i>Global Plan of Action</i>, including consideration of options for the adoption of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i>

³ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 17

⁴ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 21

⁵ CGRFA-12/09/8, paragraph 18 and CGRFA-12/09/04, paragraph 3

2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional meetings to consider the update of the <i>Global Plan of Action</i> • Consultations with partners on updating of the <i>Global Plan of Action</i> • Consultation with the Secretariat of the International Treaty • Preparation of first draft updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint meeting of the Bureau of the Commission and the Bureau of the Treaty Governing Body to review the first draft of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i> • Review of the draft updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i> by the Working Group at its Fifth Session
CGRFA-13/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONSIDERATION OF THE UPDATED <i>GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION</i> FOR ADOPTION • Provide guidance with regards to the implementation and monitoring of the implementation of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i> • Review of indicators and monitoring for the implementation of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i>

8. The plan for the process of updating the *Global Plan of Action* includes a series of regional consultations, organized in 2010 in collaboration with relevant organizations. In total, seven consultations were held respectively for Europe, Africa, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Near East, North Africa and Central Asia, and South Pacific, as shown in the time-table provided in Annex 1. These consultations reviewed the status of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture at the regional level and identified priority activities which require updating, as well as possible gaps and needs based on the findings of the SoWPGR-2. A working document containing the current *Global Plan of Action* and relevant sections of the SoWPGR-2, in particular, sections dealing with identified gaps and needs, and a regional analysis of the state of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture were made available to the participants of all regional consultations and used as the basis for discussion during the working sessions. Overall inputs received from the regional consultations appear to a large extent compatible which will facilitate their incorporation into the draft updated *Global Plan of Action*.

9. Additional information is provided on 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*.

Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

10. The Governing Body at its Second Session also recognized the Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* as an important tool that could contribute to the identification of potential resources for the implementation of the Funding Strategy.⁶ At its Third Session, the Governing Body invited the Commission to continue monitoring progress

⁶ IT/GB-2/07/Report, Para 79.

made to develop the Facilitating Mechanism as necessary, and encouraged Contracting Parties to take full advantage of the information made available through the Facilitating Mechanism.⁷

11. In line with the objective, operational principles, activities and operational structure of the Facilitating Mechanism supported by the Commission at its Tenth Regular Session, FAO together with Bioversity International and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) published the Facilitating Mechanism's portal in English in June 2007. The Facilitating Mechanism has been further enhanced. Activities have progressed mainly toward the further implementation of information servicing through its web-based portal by enriching existing content and by widening the range of potential beneficiaries. In this regard, French and Spanish versions have been added to the portal, and the number of searchable funding opportunities has been increased by 357 percent to a total of 714 funding programmes. Information can be retrieved either by specifying one or more of the search criteria, or by a text search through the Facilitating Mechanism's portal. 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, other key documents in the field of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and searchable databases on networks and institutions, germplasm databases on 307 networks and institutions, 41 germplasm information systems, more than 5,500 national projects on plant genetic resources, and a database on information sources. It also maintains a highlight section that provides news about recent publications, forthcoming congresses, exhibitions, and other events. The Facilitating Mechanism's portal is available at: <http://www.globalplanofaction.org/>

12. At its Twelfth Regular Session, the Commission welcomed the progress made in the further development of the Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. It agreed that the further operation of the Facilitating Mechanism, including awareness-raising, should be undertaken in synergy with the activities undertaken to implement the International Treaty. The Commission stressed the need to continue to advance the Facilitating Mechanism in order to mobilize financial and other support for developing countries, to assist their implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.⁸ The update of the *Global Plan of Action* will also contribute to the further development of the Facilitating Mechanism.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action

13. The new monitoring approach of the *Global Plan of Action* adopted since 2004 has resulted so far in the establishment of 64 National Information Sharing Mechanisms now accessible through the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS) that is available at: <http://apps3.fao.org/wiews/wiews.jsp>. At its Twelfth Regular Session, the Commission recognized that this country-led and participatory process has strengthened national programmes, fostered partnerships for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and contributed to the preparation of the Country Reports and national assessments on plant genetic resources for the preparation of the SoWPGR-2. The Governing Body will take stock of the existing information systems and outline a process for the development of the global information system in the context of Article 17 of the International Treaty, including the roles and contribution of the Facilitating Mechanism, WIEWS, and the National Information Sharing Mechanisms without duplicating efforts. The update of the *Global Plan of Action* will also guide the future monitoring of its implementation.

⁷ IT/GB-3/09/Report, Para 27.

⁸ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 26

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

14. An information paper has been developed by the CGIAR centres on this particular topic “*Experience of the IARC of the CGIAR with the implementation of the agreements with the Governing Body, with particular reference to the use of the standard material transfer agreement for Annex 1 and non-Annex 1 crops*”⁹.

IV. INTERNATIONAL PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES NETWORKS

15. 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.

16. The SoWPGR-2 that was endorsed by the Commission at its Twelfth Regular Session, underlines the importance of networks for promoting cooperation, sharing knowledge, information and ideas, exchanging germplasm and for carrying out joint research and other activities. Networks support the sharing of expertise and help compensate or provide backstopping in cases where certain network participants lack the critical mass to carry out particular activities. They enable synergies to be captured when different partners have different and complementary skills and capacities. Collaboration is also critical to gaining maximum benefits under legal and policy instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the *Global Plan of Action* and the International Treaty and to meeting associated obligations.

17. The SoWPGR-2 highlights that overall there has been a dramatic increase in international activities since 1996, in all fields related to the conservation and use of PGRFA. Many new regional and crop-specific networks and programmes have been set up, at least in part in response to the priorities for action contained in the *Global Plan of Action*. The CBD and the International Treaty have both served to give prominence to the need for greater international collaboration. Many programmes set up to promote various aspects of the CBD or the International Treaty, involve collaboration among multiple partners. It also stresses the need to establish effective linkages between networks dealing with conservation, breeding and seed production and distribution, in order to bring the benefits to the farmers themselves, in the form of improved seed.

18. Among the relevant activities carried out by international networks, it is worth noting that the European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR) has its 30th anniversary in 2010. ECPGR is a collaborative Programme among most European countries, aimed at facilitating the long-term conservation on a cooperative basis and the increased utilization of plant genetic resources in Europe. The objectives of the ECPGR are to: (i) facilitate the long-term in situ and ex situ conservation of plant genetic resources in Europe; (ii) facilitate the increased utilization of plant genetic resources in Europe; (iii) strengthen links between all

⁹ IT/GB-4/11/Inf. 5

plant genetic resources programmes in Europe and promote the integration of countries that are not members of ECPGR; (iv) encourage cooperation between all stakeholders, including NGOs and private breeders; (v) increase the planning of joint activities including the development of joint project proposals to be submitted to funding agencies; (vi) encourage the sharing of conservation responsibilities for PGRFA in Europe; (vii) increase awareness, at all levels, of the importance of PGRFA activities including conservation and sustainable use; and (viii) seek collaboration with other relevant regional and global initiatives.

19. It is worth mentioning that in the relevant recommendations made by the last External Reviews of Bioversity International regarding the Regional Programme of Europe in 2009, which were relevant to ECPGR, it was suggested to promote and support national PGR programmes; consider fund-raising activities and develop a funding strategy, involving the plant breeding sector into network activities; strengthen the inter-regional contacts; strengthen links with Eastern Europe; and improve the regional information infrastructure.

V. THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON PGRFA

20. At its Third session, the Governing Body of the International Treaty requested the Secretary of the International Treaty to continue to collaborate with FAO and other relevant stakeholders on information technologies to facilitate their contribution to the continuous development of the global information system of Article 17 of the International Treaty, in order to promote greater access to relevant information and information systems by Contracting Parties and other relevant stakeholders. It also requested the Secretariat to develop a vision paper to be presented to its Fourth Session to take stock of existing information systems and to outline a process for the development of this global information system. The vision paper is available in document IT/GB-4/11/19.

VI. STATE OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

21. Since the Third Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty, the SoWPGR-2 was presented to and endorsed by the Commission as the authoritative assessment of this sector. FAO was requested to finalize the report, as well as prepare a synthetic account of the SoWPGR-2 that contains its main findings and conclusions, and highlights the gaps and needs for the future, which would be valuable in conveying the messages of the SoWPGR-2 to policy-makers and others.¹⁰ The SoWPGR-2 was launched by the FAO Director-General at FAO Headquarters, Rome, on 26 October 2010. It is considered as a major contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity (2010). The SoWPGR-2 is available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1500e/i1500e00.htm>. The SoWPGR-2 has been widely distributed through FAO distribution channels. The translation of the SoWPGR-2 into all official FAO languages is being undertaken through extra-budgetary resources from donors (Federation of Russia and Spain) and through FAO Regular Programme.

22. Following the Commission's request, the synthetic account has been prepared which presents the most significant changes in the conservation and use of plant genetic resources since the first report on *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* was published in 1998. It is a snapshot of the main changes and urgent needs in managing, safeguarding and using PGRFA, as well as in the area of national and international collaboration,

¹⁰ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 18

to ensure that these vital resources continue to be available to present and future generations and to further increase PGRFA contribution to global food security. The synthetic account has been translated in all official languages and widely distributed. It is available at: http://typo3.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/documents/PGR/SoW2/Synthetic_Account_SO WPGR-2.pdf The Core messages of the SoWPGR-2 are as follows:

- PGRFA are essential raw materials for helping farmers respond to climate change. Plant breeding capacity needs to be strengthened and breeding programmes must be expanded to develop varieties with traits needed to meet this challenge.
- Loss of PGRFA has reduced options for the agricultural sector. The major causes of genetic erosion are land clearing, population pressures, overgrazing, environmental degradation and changing agricultural practices.
- Local PGRFA diversity found in farmers' fields or in situ is still largely inadequately documented and managed. There is now a growing awareness of the importance of this diversity and its contribution to local food security.
- There has been progress in securing PGRFA diversity in a larger number of national genebanks. However, much of the diversity, particularly of crop wild relatives and underused species relevant for food and agriculture, still needs to be secured for present and future use.
- Rapid scientific advances, especially in information technology and molecular biology, have introduced new techniques for PGRFA conservation and use. Their wider application offers new opportunities to increase efficiency of the conservation–production chain.
- Significant policy developments have changed the landscape of PGRFA management. Many more countries have adopted national programmes, laws and regulations for biodiversity following the adoption of the CBD and the International Treaty.
- Better communication, collaboration and partnerships are needed among institutions dealing with PGRFA management – from conservation to plant breeding and seed systems. These are the key factors for an integrated conservation and utilization strategy and delivering sustainable solutions to build a world without hunger.

ANNEX 1

TIME-TABLE FOR THE UPDATING OF THE *GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION*

Activity	2010												2011							
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	
1- Preparation of the "annotated" <i>Global Plan of Action</i>		•	•	•																
2- Regional consultation for Europe					•															
3- Regional consultation for Africa						•														
4- Regional consultation for North America							•													
5- Regional consultation for LAC								•												
6- Regional consultation for Asia									•											
7- Regional consultation for NENA										•										
8- Regional consultation for South Pacific											•									
9- E-consultation with partners												•								
10- Preparation of first updated draft <i>Global Plan of Action</i>											•	•	•	•						
11- CGRFA/ITPGRGFA Joint Bureau Meeting															•					
12- ITWG-PGRFA: Fifth Session																	•			
13- Updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i> - Final draft																		•		
14- CGRFA: Thirteenth Session																			•	