



The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



FIFTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Muscat, Oman, 24-28 September 2013

NOTE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Last Update: 15 July 2013

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This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Participants are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies.

1. MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Date and place of the meeting

1. The Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) will be held in Muscat, Oman, from 24 to 28 September 2013. The meeting will start on Tuesday 24 September 2013, at 10.00 a.m, and it will be preceded by two days of informal regional consultations, on Sunday 22 and Monday 23 September 2013.

The meeting place for the Regular Session is “Al Bustan Palace” Hotel .

Communications with the Secretariat

2. All correspondence related to the meeting should be addressed to the Secretary of the International Treaty at the following address:

Mr Shakeel Bhatti
Secretary
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 1
00153 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 5705 3441
Fax: +39 06 5705 3057
E-mail: PGRFA-Treaty@fao.org
<http://www.planttreaty.org/content/gb5-meeting-room>

3. Any queries or requests for information should also be addressed to the Secretariat of the International Treaty at the above address.

Invitation Letters

4. The invitation letters are dispatched through the FAO official channels of communication. The Secretariat does not issue individual invitation letters. The model invitation letter is posted on the official website of the International Treaty at <http://www.planttreaty.org/content/gb5-meeting-room>

Admission of participants

5. Sessions of the Governing Body are convened under the provisions of Article 19 of the International Treaty and are open to all Contracting Parties to the International Treaty as well as to observers.

States that are Contracting Parties

For States that are Contracting Parties, it is recommended to:

- Communicate to the Secretary the names and contact details (including mail address, telephone and fax number, and e-mail address) of the Contracting Party delegate, alternate, expert(s) and adviser(s), no later than **15 July 2013**.
- Submit credentials prior to the meeting, in order to facilitate the preliminary clearing of participants by the Secretariat. Credentials should be sent to the Secretary no later than **15 July 2013**. Credentials should be issued by, or on behalf of, the Head of State or Government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister of the Department

concerned. For more information, please read the note on credentials that is available at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/ag/agp/planttreaty/gb5/CREDENTIALS-e.pdf>

6. Contracting Party delegates whose names and credentials have not been submitted before the Session will be asked, upon registration, to submit their credentials. The title of the meeting must appear in the document.

States that are not Contracting Parties

7. States that are not Contracting Parties, as well as the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, may be represented as observers at the Session. As requested by the FAO Director-General in his letter of invitation, observers should communicate to the Secretary by **15 July 2013** the name(s) and contact details (including address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address) of the person or persons designated to participate in the Session. Observers whose names are not communicated before the Session will be asked, upon registration, to show a letter, on official letter-headed paper, confirming their nomination to participate in this Session.

Other international bodies or agencies

8. Any other international body or agency, whether governmental or non-governmental, qualified in fields relating to conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, may also be represented at the Session as observer. Admission of observers will be subject to the receipt by the Secretary of an official letter from the body or agency before **15 July 2013**, providing the name, official title and contact details (including address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address) of the person(s) representing the body or agency. Observers will be asked upon registration to show a letter, on official letter-headed paper, from their body or agency confirming their nomination to participate in this Session. For more information, please contact the Secretariat of the International Treaty.

2. REGISTRATION

Online pre-registration

9. Online pre-registration is mandatory. The information will be used to prepare the badges providing access to the meeting places and for the first draft of the *Provisional List of Participants*. Participants have the obligation to provide accurate contact details. Please remember to log in with your Treaty user account before using the online pre-registration form. If you do not have an account yet, please register to create one. Please note that the use of this on-line system requires a valid e-mail address. Online pre-registration can be completed at the following internet address: <http://www.planttreaty.org/en/civcrm/event/info?reset=1&id=7>

On-site registration

10. Registration of participants for the Fifth Session of the Governing Body will take place at the meeting venue. Registration will commence on 22 September 2013 at 9:00 and will continue the following days from 9:00 to 13:00 hrs. and from 15:00 to 18:00 hrs. It is recommended that all participants register at the meeting venue soon after arrival.

- In order to register, all participants must show proof of identity and, as applicable, a letter of credentials or any other valid document (see section on admission).
- A *Provisional List of Participants* will be issued during the Session, and revised as necessary. Corrections or additions to the list should be done on paper and handed to the Secretariat at the Registration Desk.

3. DOCUMENTATION

11. Working and information documents for the Fifth Session of the Governing Body will be published on the website of the International Treaty as soon as they become available at the following address: <http://www.planttreaty.org/content/gb5>

12. With a view to minimizing the environmental impact of the meeting, the Secretariat will limit the use of paper as much as possible. Accordingly, the complete set of pre-session documents will be made available in digital form to participants at the meeting venue. Paper copies will be made available at the meeting venue only for a limited number of pre-session documents, such as the Provisional Annotated Agenda and the draft Programme of Work and Budget.

13. Participants are therefore advised to bring their own copies of documents, as they deem appropriate, and to refrain from requesting additional copies from the document distribution desk. Those participants who are not in a position to bring their own copies of the documents should inform the Secretariat to that effect, and arrangements will be made for a full set of working documents to be ready in the language, or languages requested. Such requests should be made as soon as possible but no later than **15 July 2013**.

14. Documents issued during the Session will be made available at the document distribution desk. Delegations are requested to provide their addresses to the floor in written form to the Secretariat soon after the delivery.

4. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE SESSION

15. The regular Session will be conducted in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian.

5. FORMALITIES FOR ENTRY INTO OMAN: VISA REQUIREMENTS

16. Entry in Oman is subject to presentation of a passport or other travel document that certifies the identity of the traveller and is valid under the international agreements signed by Oman and not subject to specific prohibitions. The Omani Government grants Visas on Arrival (VoA) upon payment of a fee of 5 OMR (10 Euro /USD 13) at the airport which is valid for 10 days. If you are a delegated funded by FAO, please note that this amount is already included in the Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) as miscellaneous.

17. VoA is available to the nationals of countries listed in the *Annex* to this note. The list is based on information available at the time of preparation of this document. Nationals who are eligible for Visa on Arrival can make visa payments at the Travelex Foreign Exchange bureau located in the immigration arrivals hall; payments can be accepted in most currencies or by credit card. In order to reduce time and queues, the automatic receipt issued to the traveller will have to be presented at the immigration desk. Although there are payment facilities in place, you are advised to carry a small amount of USD to pay the visa fee at Muscat Airport.

18. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of Oman will set up an information desk at the Airport and will be coordinating the arrival of participants.

19. The Secretariat will compile information on arrivals (flight code, date, time and hotel where you have made your own booking) for coordination of local transportation with the Host Government. Please, send this information to the Secretariat.
20. Citizens of countries not on the VoA list or not exempted from visa, will be required to apply for a visa before entering Oman. A passport with a date of validity of at least 6 months from the date of entry in Oman and proof of onward passage (either by return or through tickets) are required.
21. Participants are advised to enquire at the nearest Embassy or Consulate of Oman whether visas are required to enter Oman.
22. The National Organizing Committee will help to facilitate visa application ONLY in those cases where there is no Embassy or Consulate of Oman in the departure country. The Secretariat will provide an application form and will collect the photocopy of the passport. The Secretariat will be able to process the requests received before **15 July 2013**.

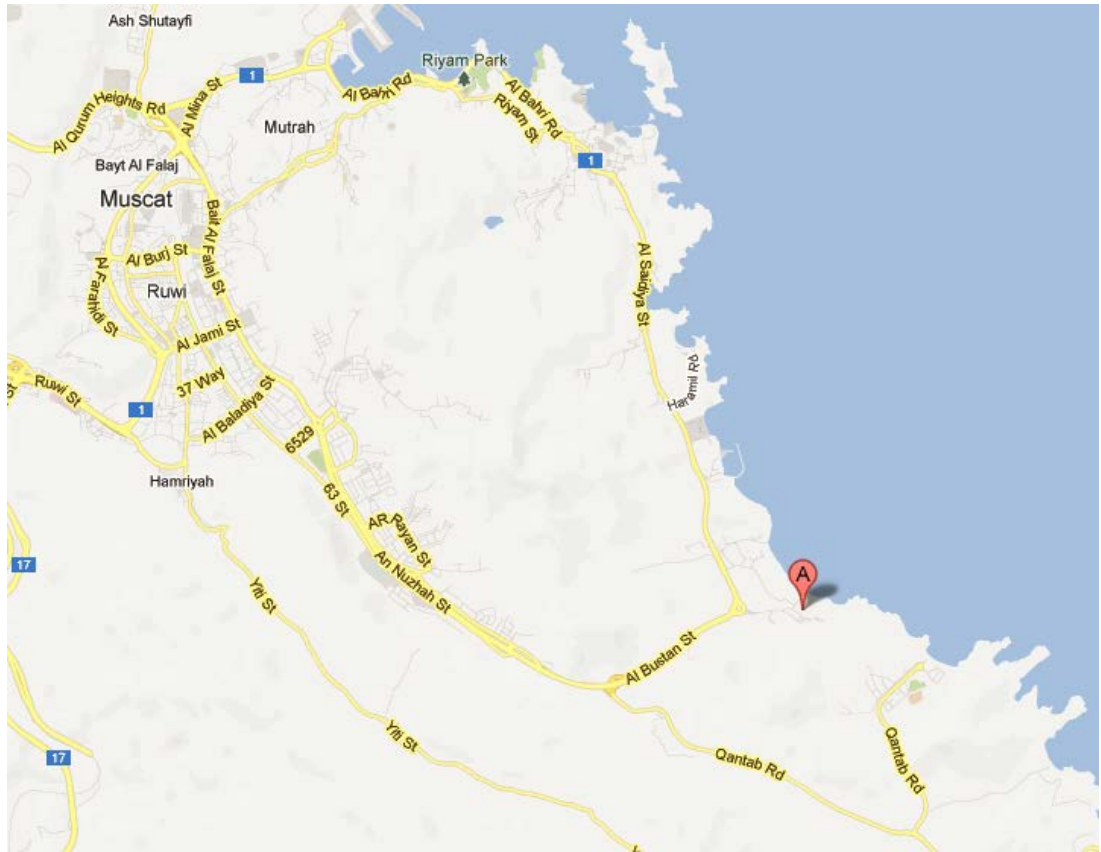
6. TRANSPORTATION

23. Participants coming by air will arrive at Muscat Airport, also known as Seeb International Airport. The airport is situated approximately 32 Km west of the capital.
24. From 21 September to 24 September 2013, there will be a shuttle service provided by the Host Government. Some hotels also offer airport pick-up services. Please enquire about this service when making your hotel reservation. A taxi service is also available from the airport. The average cost of a taxi from the airport to most of the pre-selected hotels in Muscat is approximately USD15,55.
25. During the Session, the Secretariat will establish, in coordination with the Host Government, an information and travel desk at the conference center to facilitate information and coordinate transportation from Muscat to the airport.

7. VENUE AND HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

Venue

26. The meeting venue, the Al-Bustan Palace Hotel, is located in the capital area, northeast Oman. Muscat is an enclave containing a wide range of hotels and resorts. It is 30 minutes away from the airport. Muscat is often referred to as the "walled city". The city referred as "Muscat" is in fact composed of three smaller towns which have grown together over time. They are:
- Muscat proper is the site of the royal palaces;
 - Matrah (Matruh), originally a fishing village, and home to the maze-like Matrah Souq;
 - Ruwi, generally considered the commercial and diplomatic centre of the city.



27. The City lies on the Arabian sea along the Gulf of Oman and is in the proximity of the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

Hotel Reservations

28. Participants are kindly requested to make their own reservations. Participants are advised to book a hotel room in Muscat as soon as possible, to avoid last minute accommodation in hotels located far away from the meeting venue.

29. Special reduced rates have been negotiated with the hotels listed below. These hotels are located in the same area of Muscat and transportation will be provided to the venue. Additional information on prices and modalities of bookings is provided by the Secretariat at:

<http://www.planttreaty.org/content/gb5-meeting-room>

Al Bustan Palace 5*

PO Box 1998, Muscat 114 Oman

Phone: +968 24 799666

Fax: +968 24 799600

City Seasons 4*

Al Khuwair City Center, Sultan Qaboos Road 3513 Way, Muskata 114, Oman

Phone: +968 24 394800

Holiday Muscat 4*

Al Khuwair, PO Box 1185 , Muscat, PC 111

Phone: +968 2439 9100

Safeer Hotels 3*

Al-Khuwair-P O Box 121, code 115, Madinat Sultan Qaboos Street

Phone: +968 2460 2355

Tulip Inn 3*

Al Khuwair, P.O. Box 1285, beside Zawawi Mosque, Muscat 114

Phone: +968 9414 6467

Ibis 3*

Dohat Aladab Road Al Khuwair, PO Box 1512, Muscat

Phone: +968 244 89890

Fax : +968 244 87970

There are many other five-star, four –star and three -star hotels located in Muscat . However, the shuttle service to the meeting venue that is provided by the Host Government will only be

available from the hotels listed above.

8. SUPPORT TO THE PARTICIPATION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CONTRACTING PARTIES

30. Limited extra-budgetary funds have been made available to the Secretariat for the purpose of supporting one representative per developing country that is Contracting Party to the Treaty. Support will be provided upon request. Countries wishing to avail themselves of such support should inform the Secretariat before **15 July 2013**.

31. For assistance with financial support to the participation of developing country Contracting Parties, please contact us by email at PGRFA-treaty@fao.org, or by phone at +3906570 54917.

9. SIDE EVENTS AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

32. Side events are scheduled to take place at the meeting venue from Tuesday 24 September to Friday 27 September 2013, from 13.00 to 15.00 and from 18.00 to 19.30 hrs. If you wish to organize a side event, please register online at:

<http://www.planttreaty.org/content/side-event-registration>

33. Organizers of side events whose request cannot be accommodated are encouraged to consider combining their events with other relevant scheduled side events. Side events may be rescheduled to accommodate requests from the Plenary or by decision of the Secretariat.

34. Once a side event is scheduled, it will be announced and posted in an online calendar on the International Treaty's website. The organizers will be contacted by the Secretariat for further information. No additional catering arrangements are foreseen for side-events at this Session.

35. A number of tables will be set up at the meeting venue to display promotional materials.

36. For assistance on side event requests, please contact the Treaty Secretariat by phone at +39 06 570 55430 or by email PGRFA-Treaty@fao.org.

10. USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT OMAN

Oman

37. Oman, officially called "the Sultanate of Oman" is an Arab state in southwest Asia, situated on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula, 309,500sq Km with 3,165 Km of coastline. It has a strategically important position at the mouth of Persian Gulf. The form of government is the monarchy. With the advent of 1970 the country came the dawn of a modern renaissance, with the beginning of the prosperous era of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Oman is one of the most developed and stable countries in the Arab world. In 1981 the sultanate became a founding member of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council.

38. A vast gravel desert plain covers most of central Oman, with mountain ranges along the north (Al Hajar Mountains) and southeast coast, where the country's main cities are also located: the capital city Muscat, Sohar and Sur in the north, and Salalah in the south. Oman's climate is

hot and dry in the interior and humid along the coast. The peninsula of Musandam, which has a strategic location on the strait of Hormuz, is separated from the rest of Oman by the United Arab Emirates. The series of small towns known collectively as Dibba are the gateway to the Musandam peninsula on land and the fishing villages of Musandam by sea, with boats available for hire at khasab for trips into the Musandam peninsula by sea. The central desert of Oman is an important source of meteorites for scientific analysis.

39. The country has a racially mixed population, a heritage of its imperial history. Many Omani people originate from East Africa or Baluchistan. According to the 2011 census, the total population was 2.846 million. 43% of the population is under the age of 15. About 50% of the population lives in Muscat and the Batinah coastal plain northwest of the capital, about 200000 live in the Dhofar (southern) region, and about 30000 live in the remote Musandam Peninsula on the Strait of Hormuz.

40. Desert shrub and desert grass, common to southern Arabia, are found, but vegetation is sparse in interior plateau, which is largely gravel desert. The greater monsoon rainfall in Dhofar and the mountains make the growth there more luxuriant during summer; coconut palms grow plentifully in the coastal plains of Dhofar and frankincense is produced in the hills, with abundant oleander and varieties of acacia. The Al Hajar Mountains are a distinct ecoregion, the highest points in eastern Arabia with wildlife including the Arabian tahr.

Climate

41. Oman has a hot climate and very little rainfall. Annual rainfall in Muscat averages 100 mm, falling mostly in January. The Dhofar Mountains area receives seasonal rainfall (from late June to late September) as a result of the monsoon winds from the Indian Ocean saturated with cool moisture and heavy fog. The mountain areas receive more plentiful rainfall on the higher parts of the Jabal Akhdar exceeding 400 mm in some parts of the coast, particularly near the island of Masirah. The climate generally is very hot, with temperatures reaching around 50° C in the hot season, from May to September.

42. Drought and limited rainfall contribute to shortages in the nation's water supply. Given the fact that Oman has limited renewable water resources the maintenance of an adequate supply of water for agricultural and domestic use is one of Oman's most pressing environmental challenge; 94% of available water is used in farming and 2% for industrial activity, with the majority being sourced from fossil water in the desert areas and spring water in hills and mountains. Drinking water is available throughout the country, either piped or delivered. The soil in coastal plains, such as Salalah, have shown increased levels of salinity, due to over exploitation of ground water and encroachment by seawater in the water table. Pollution of beaches and other coastal areas by oil tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman is also a persistent risk. The following are the average temperature and humidity for the month of September in Muscat:

Month	Temp Range (° C)	Humidity
September	40°	63%

Language

43. Arabic is the official language of Oman. English is widely spoken and it has been currently adopted as a second language. Almost all signs and writings appear in both Arabic and

English. Endangered languages in Oman include Bathari, Harsusi, Hobyot, Jibbali, Khojki, Kumzari, Mehri and Zidgali. Oman was the first Persian Gulf state to have German taught as second language. Due to the influx of Pakistani migrants during the late 1980s and 1990s , a significant number of its population speaks also Urdu.

Customs

44. Omanis are friendly people and are very helpful to tourists. In turn, tourists should respect the ways and traditions of the Omani people. The usual rules of respect when traveling in a Muslim country should be followed in Oman. Non-Muslims are permitted to bring two litres of alcohol into the country at Seeb International Airport only. You are not allowed to bring alcohol into the country in private cars at land. Stay quiet about the sultan, who has done a lot to develop the nation in recent history. He is expected to be held in extreme respect. It is very impolite for foreigners to dress in tight or revealing clothing even if the locals rarely say anything. For women it is preferable to avoid smoking in public places.

Currency

45. The currency unit of Oman is the Omani Ryal (OMR) , it is divided into 1000 Baissa. The Omani Ryal comes in coins of 5, 10, 25, 50 Baissa, and in notes of 1, 5, 10, 20,50 Ryal. The April 2013 currency exchange rate is approximately USD 1 = 0,39 OMR and EUR 1=0,50 OMR. The currency exchange rate fluctuates regularly. Please check for the latest exchange rates.

46. Major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club) and traveller's cheques in main currencies are generally accepted in leading hotels, restaurants, department stores and several large stores. Traveller's cheques and bank notes in all major currencies may be exchanged at all commercial banks, majority of the hotels and foreign exchange counters. ATMs are also available.

Time

47. Oman time is:

Standard time zone: UTC/GMT +4 hours

No daylight saving time in 2013

Time zone abbreviation: GST - Gulf Standard Time

Since May 2013, the working days in Oman are from Sunday to Thursday.

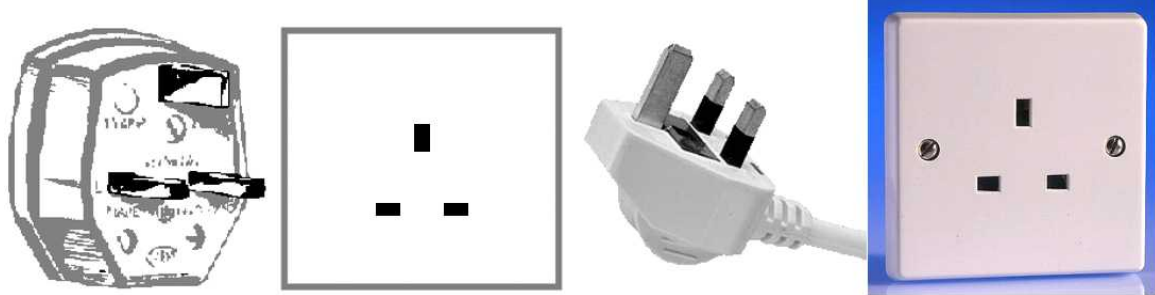
Taxes and tipping

48. A government value added tax of 10 percent is charged. It is commonly accepted in big cities to add a charge of 5 percent for service in restaurants.

49. Tipping is not compulsory but highly appreciated, usually at a level of no more than 20 percent.

Electricity

50. Electrical power in Oman is mostly 220-240 volts. Electrical sockets (outlets) in the Sultanate of Oman are the "Type G " British BS-1363 type. If your appliance's plug doesn't match the shape of these sockets, you will need a travel plug adapter in order to plug in.



Telephone services and useful telephone numbers

51. Telephone services are available in hotels, restaurants and cafes. Pre-paid mobile telephone cards are available at hotels and local shops. The dialling codes are as follows:

- (a) Country code 00968
- (b) Muscat dial code 00968 24

52. Emergency telephone numbers are as follows:

Emergency and Inquiries	9999
Royal Oman police	24 560099
Al Nahdha Hospital	24 837800
Khoula Hospital	24 560455
Royal Hospital	24 599000
Muscat private Hospital	24 583600

Taxi:

Al Dar Taxi 24700555/ 24700777
 Comfort Line 24702191
 Hello Taxi 24607011/ 24607012

Car hire:

Al Ibtisama Trading 24703404; Avis 24607235; Budget 24794721/ 24510816 (24hrs)
 Europcar 24700190; Global Car Rental 24697140; Hertz 24566208; Mark 24562444

53. Flight information may be obtained by calling Seeb International Airport at +968-24518746 / 24519223 or 1101 Domestic flights 2451923. Information is also available on the website: <http://www.omanairports.com/>

Postal, facsimile and internet services

54. Postal and facsimile services are available at post offices and in the majority of hotels. Internet services are also available in the major hotels.

Business hours

55. Banking hours are from Sunday to Thursday between 8.00 and 14.00. There is a Bank in Al- Bustan Palace with an ATM accepting VISA and other common credit cards.

11. DISCLAIMER

56. FAO disclaims all responsibility for medical, accident and travel insurance, compensation for death or disability, for loss of or damage to personal property and for any other loss that may be incurred during travel time or the period of participation in the Session. In this context, it is strongly recommended that participants obtain, prior to departure, international medical insurance for the period of participation in the Session.

Annex**LIST OF COUNTRIES ELIGIBLE FOR VISA UPON ARRIVAL (May 2013)**

This information may change. Participants are advised to enquire at the nearest Embassy or Consulate of Oman the type of visas required to enter Oman. You can also visit the website of the Royal Oman Police: http://www.rop.gov.om/english/dg_pr_visas_officialvisit.asp

http://www.rop.gov.om/english/dg_pr_visas_tourist.asp

The designations employed in this information document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Afganistan	Ecuador
Albania	Egypt
Algeria	El Salvador
Angola	Eritrea
Armenia	Estonia
Australia	Ethiopia
Austria	Fiji
Bangladesh	Finland
Belgium	France
Benin	Gabon
Buthan	Germany
Brazil	Ghana
Bulgaria	Greece
Burkina Faso	Guatemala
Burundi	Guinea
Cambodia	Guinea – Bissau
Cameroon	Honduras
Canada	Hungary
Central African Republic	Iceland
Chad	India
Congo, Republic of	Indonesia
Cook Islands	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Costa Rica	Ireland
Cote d'Ivoire	Italy
Croatia	Jamaica
Cuba	Jordan
Cyprus	Kenia
Czech Republic	Kiribati
Denmark	Kuwait
Djibouti	Kyrgyzstan

Lao PDR	Qatar
Latvia	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Lebanon	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Lesotho	Romania
Liberia	Saint Lucia
Libya	Samoa
Lithuania	Sao Tome and Principe
Luxembourg	Saudi Arabia
Madagascar	Senegal
Malawi	Seychelles
Malaysia	Siera Leone
Maldives	Slovakia
Mali	Slovenia
Mauritania	Spain
Mauritius	Sudan
Morocco	Sweden
Myanmar	Switzerland
Namibia	Syrian Arabic Republic
Nepal	Trinidad and Tobago
Netherlands	Tunisia
Nicaragua	Turkey
Norway	Uganda
Oman	United Arab Emirates
Pakistan	United Kingdom
Palau	United Republic of Tanzania
Panama	Uruguay
Paraguay	Venezuela
Peru	Yemen
Philippines	Zambia
Poland	Zimbabwe
Portugal	