



# The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**E****Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda****FIFTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY****Muscat, Oman, 24-28 September 2013****VISION PAPER ON THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF ARTICLE  
17, GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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1. This document presents an update on the activities carried out by the Secretariat in this intersessional period and a summary of the most significant advances in the field of information systems on plant genetic resources at global and regional levels.
  2. Following the request of the Governing Body at its Fourth Session for the establishment of a process for the implementation of Article 17, this document also contains a draft resolution establishing an expert consultation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to provide advice on its design and implementation in the context of Article 17 of the International Treaty.
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*Appendix: Draft Resolution on the Development of the Global Information System on Plant  
Genetic Resources in the Context of Article 17 of the International Treaty.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is regulated by Article 17 of the International Treaty, under Part V on “Supporting Components”. This article states that:

*“17.1 Contracting Parties shall cooperate to develop and strengthen a global information system to facilitate the exchange of information, based on existing information systems, on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, with the expectation that such exchange of information will contribute to the sharing of benefits by making information on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture available to all Contracting Parties.*

*17.2 Based on notification by the Contracting Parties, early warning should be provided about hazards that threaten the efficient maintenance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, with a view to safeguarding the material.*

*17.3 The Contracting Parties shall cooperate with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the FAO in its periodic reassessment of the state of the world’s plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in order to facilitate the updating of the rolling Global Plan of Action referred to in Article 14.”*

2. At its Third Session, the Governing Body “welcome[d] the efforts underway to coordinate and improve information systems documenting plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, based on existing information systems, which should build the basis of the Global Information System, foreseen in Article 17, consistent with Article 12.3b, of the International Treaty”.

3. At that same Session, Contracting Parties “request[ed] the Secretary to collaborate with FAO and other relevant stakeholders on information technologies to facilitate their contribution to the continuous development of the global information system in the context of Article 17 of the Treaty, in order to promote greater access to relevant information and information systems by Contracting Parties and other relevant stakeholders”<sup>1</sup>.

4. At its Third Session Contracting Parties also requested the Secretariat “to develop a vision paper to be presented to the Fourth Session of the Governing Body to take stock of existing information systems and to outline a process for the development of this global information system”.

5. The Secretariat developed a vision paper and presented it to the Fourth Session of the Governing Body in Bali, Indonesia<sup>2</sup>. The paper presented information on some of the major information systems on PGRFA and information and technology transfer initiatives identified at that time that could contribute to the sharing of benefits in the context of the International Treaty. Furthermore, it brought to the attention of the Contracting Parties the need to set up a consultation process for the effective development of a coherent Global Information System.

6. At that Session, Contracting Parties recalled that in developing the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, cooperation would be sought “with the Clearing House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in accordance with Article 17.1 of the Treaty”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 7/2009 contained in IT/GB-3/9/Report.

<sup>2</sup> IT/GB-4/11/19.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution 8/2011 contained in Appendix A.8 of IT/GB-4/11/Report.

7. Contracting Parties also “*request[ed] the Secretary to further elaborate the vision paper on the development of the Global Information System in the context of Article 17 of the Treaty, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders*”.<sup>4</sup>

8. In the context of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing and the discussion on the documentation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, Contracting Parties also “*Welcome[d] the efforts underway to coordinate and improve information systems documenting plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, based on existing information systems, in order to develop and strengthen the Global Information System, foreseen in Article 17, consistent with Article 12.3b, of the International Treaty, and requests the Secretary to further develop the Vision Paper prepared for the current Session of the Governing Body*”.<sup>5</sup>

9. This document provides a brief update on the activities carried out by the Secretariat since the last Session of the Governing Body in partnership with relevant organizations and a summary of the progress made in the field of information systems on plant genetic resources at global and regional levels.

10. This paper also contains an advanced proposal for the establishment of an expert consultation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture during the intersessional periods. A draft resolution is presented in the *Appendix* to this document for the consideration of the Governing Body.

## **II. ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE CONTEXT OF ARTICLE 17 SINCE THE LAST SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY**

### **1. Information systems and tools in support of the Multilateral System**

11. At its Fourth Session, the Governing Body noted that the Secretary had developed, in consultation with relevant organizations, appropriate and cost-effective processes to facilitate the submission, collection and storage of information in the implementation of Article 4.1 of the Third Party Beneficiary Procedures, and further requested the Secretary to continue applying adequate measures to ensure the integrity of information and, where required, confidentiality of the information provided<sup>6</sup>.

12. Following such request by the Governing Body, the Secretariat completed the development of information technology systems that facilitated the submission, collection and storage of SMTA information in the implementation of Article 4.1 of the Third Party Beneficiary Procedures. The systems were integrated in one solution, further developed, tested and made available on-line to users of the SMTA, under the name of “Easy-SMTA”.

13. In order to assist potential and actual Providers and Recipients under the SMTA, Easy-SMTA combines the SMTA generating and reporting functions, which enable data to flow into a secure Data Store, with two additional tools.

14. The first tool is the Online SMTA Generating and Reporting (OSGR), which supports the full SMTA workflow with functions for the generation, revision and acceptance of new SMTAs as well as for the reporting to the Governing Body on concluded SMTAs.

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Resolution 4/2011 contained in Appendix A.4 of IT/GB-4/11/Report.

<sup>6</sup> The information here provided on Easy-SMTA also reflected in section V on “Technical implementation of the Third Party Beneficiary” of document IT/GB-5/13/19, *Report on the Operations of the Third Party Beneficiary*.

15. The second tool is the Online Reporting Form (ORF), which exclusively addresses the reporting to the Governing Body on concluded SMTAs, with options corresponding to those of the generating tool.
16. Compared to previous tools, the system has a new design and workflow to guide users in an intuitive step-by-step process. It also offers several additional functions, such as the uploading of spreadsheet files listing the Annex I material being transferred, which clearly facilitates the conclusion of and reporting on SMTAs. The Secretariat has also developed an integrated help function in each page of the system and an external help system that can be consulted online.
17. The Secretariat has also worked during 2013 on the development of a tool which facilitates the voluntary reporting to the Governing Body of the information contained in Annex 4 of the SMTA by the Recipient, through electronic means. Thanks to this tool, Recipients can easily report on the crop-based payment scheme under Article 6.11 of the SMTA as well as to submit reports on annual payments under Article 6.7. The tools have been developed as additional forms to Easy-SMTA, thus benefiting from the infrastructure already in use.
18. Easy-SMTA has been deployed online in the six official languages of the Treaty and announced in May 2012 with the publication of a notification on the Treaty's website, issued in English, French and Spanish.
19. In addition to several individuals, some IARCs of the CGIAR have utilized the functions of Easy-SMTA, and so have a number of public genebanks of Contracting Parties, mainly in Europe and North America. To date, more than one million accessions have been reported through electronic means into the data store that is connected to Easy-SMTA.
20. Based on the experience accumulated in assisting with the reporting process, the Secretariat has also developed an XML-based integration protocol to facilitate the automated reporting by major SMTA users, including some IARCs.
21. A number of Contracting Parties have also reported through Easy-SMTA on non-Annex I material which was transferred using material transfer agreements analogous to the SMTA. Such information was entered into the system at the discretion of the concerned Contracting Parties. The process neither involved extra costs nor constituted an additional burden to the system, since such system is largely automated.
22. During the current biennium, and following the request of the Governing Body, the Secretariat has also developed and integrated Easy-SMTA with a set of tools that will allow the generation of aggregated statistical data.

## **2. Capacity building programme in support to the national plant genetic resources programmes (CAPFITOGEN)**

23. During the 2012-2013 biennium the Secretariat of the International Treaty launched an initiative to develop information and analysis tools and to strengthen the technical capacity of national programmes on plant genetic resources under the name of CAPFITOGEN.
24. CAPFITOGEN is being funded by the Spanish Government and its core activities are carried out in partnership with, *inter alia*, the National Plant Genetic Resources Centre of the Spanish National Institute for Agriculture and Food Research and Technology (CRF-INIA), the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment, the Polytechnic University of Madrid, the King Juan Carlos University and the National University of Colombia.
25. The first set of tools was delivered in a technical workshop organized for Latin America and the Caribbean which took place in Bogota, Colombia, from 19 to 22 March 2013<sup>7</sup>.The

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<sup>7</sup> The workshop was announced by several channels, including the issuance of a notification by the Secretary posted on the Treaty website on 19 December 2012 and by email to all the national focal points of the Region.

workshop contributed to improve skills and capacity of the technical staff working in the area of conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture<sup>8</sup>.

26. The workshop promoted the voluntary use and adoption of several data management tools adapted to the needs of the national programs of the Latin America Region. Furthermore, it gathered information on needs to further develop new tools and adapt existing ones within the framework of the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources referred to in Article 17 of the International Treaty.

27. The tools developed by CAPFITOGEN represent an effort to bring some scientific and technological advances to the community working on conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources at regional and national levels. Each tool is designed to make efficient and easy certain tasks that until now were more complex and required expert knowledge of complex computer programming languages<sup>9</sup>. These tools are designed to assist countries that are rich in plant genetic resources and that have limited economic resources for this task in their decision-making and conservation efforts.

28. Through different training and capacity building activities such as face-to-face workshops and online support, CAPFITOGEN tools reach a wide variety of end users, including technical staff of national programs and institutions involved in the conservation of plant genetic resources.

29. These tools contribute at improving, adapting and facilitating the use of methodologies for ecogeography and geographic information systems in the area of crop genetic resources, and significantly reduce the time and effort for their adoption while maintaining its original scientific validity. This is achieved thanks to the involvement in the design of each tool of the same research group that produces the scientific advancement. The entire catalogue of tools is available online on the Treaty's Website<sup>10</sup>. Figure 1 below shows the number of countries where the first tools of CAPFITOGEN were in use in May 2013.



**Figure 1.** Countries using the first tools generated by CAPFITOGEN in May 2013.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.planttreaty.org/content/regional-coordination-workshop-latin-america-and-caribbean-2013>

<sup>9</sup> Such as Java and R.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.planttreaty.org/content/tools-capfitogen>

### 3. Monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

30. Since the last Session of the Governing Body, further progress has been made in Africa and South America in establishing National Information Sharing Mechanisms<sup>11</sup> (NISMs) for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. In light of the adoption of the Second Global Plan of Action by the FAO Council in November 2013, new indicators for monitoring its implementation and a timeframe for reporting on them and for the preparation of the Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture have been agreed by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in April 2013. A reporting format and a web based system are being made available by FAO for countries to share the information on the indicators. Additional resources are being sought to ensure the multi-lingual coverage of the previous monitoring system, improved graphical features for data analysis, as well as data migration to the new indicators and reporting format.

31. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has reiterated the need for strengthening collaboration with the International Treaty to ensure that the NISMs provide a cost effective support for building the Global Information System of Article 17 of the International Treaty<sup>12</sup>.

## III. UPDATE ON MAJOR EXISTING INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES RELEVANT TO THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

### 1. Collection Level Information

32. The largest global data source on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture at collection level continues to be managed by FAO through the World Information and Early Warning System<sup>13</sup> (WIEWS). Germplasm holdings totalling about 7.2 million accessions from more than 1800 genebanks around the world can be retrieved from WIEWS as statistics grouped by species, country of origin and biological status of the accessions. WIEWS also maintains an identification code system for genebanks. This code system is used by the plant genetic resources community for exchanging germplasm information according to the Multi-Crop Passport Descriptors (MCPD), an internationally applied standard that was produced by FAO and Bioversity International (formerly IPGRI) in 2001 and revised in 2012. WIEWS is periodically updated through either automatic data harvesting from public accession level information repositories (e.g. USDA-GRIN; EURISCO; GENESYS) and NISMs or targeted surveys. This year, on the occasion of the International Year of Quinoa, information on *ex situ* collections of quinoa and its wild relatives has been updated in WIEWS.

### 2. Accession Level Information

33. At the Third and Fourth Sessions of the Governing Body, the Secretariat reported on a three-party project with Bioversity International and the Global Crop Diversity Trust which led to the design and implementation of Genesys<sup>14</sup>. This is an accession level information database

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.pgrfa.org>

<sup>12</sup> Additional information on mutual supportive activities is contained in document IT/GB-5/13/11, *Report on matters concerning the relationship between the Governing Body and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

<sup>13</sup> <http://apps3.fao.org/wiews>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.genesys-pgr.org/>

which compiles records from several partner databases in a unique catalogue<sup>15</sup>. It also offers additional tools to query the information and export results for further analysis.

34. The results of the first phase of development of this project have been presented at a side event during the Fourth Session of the Governing Body in Bali in 2011. A series of meetings and activities have been carried out by the Secretariat and relevant stakeholders for setting up the project. The Secretariat is currently a member of the oversight committee of Genesys Phase II but has no managerial responsibilities.

35. In October 2012, the System-wide Information Network for Genetic Resources (SINGER), the germplasm information exchange network of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and its partners, ceased its activities, which are scheduled to be integrated in the Genesys portal in the near future.

36. A series of developments have occurred since the version 1.0 of GRIN-Global (GG) was released in 2011<sup>16</sup>. Most of the changes have expanded the data schema, based on feedback from users throughout the U.S. National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS). The GRIN-Global database can now handle a virtually unlimited number of descriptors for describing the growing conditions from where the sample was collected, including the biological, ecological, and geological conditions of its habitat. GG is now able to integrate the georeferencing, habitat, soil, abiotic, sampling, and genetic data for documentation of wild plant genetic resources. Other important improvements include the enhancement of the searches and the addition of several administration tools.

37. The public website of GG has also been improved with the enhancement of the taxonomy detail page, including recognizing more taxonomy synonyms. Also, accessions with rare taxonomies are hidden when the user displays the Google map page. Moreover, a "Help" item was added to the GRIN-Global menu and help information is displayed for several search types.

38. The Secretariat of the International Treaty has liaised with the development team of GRIN-Global to find ways to facilitate access to the catalogue of plant genetic resources available in the Multilateral System or under the conditions of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement. Additionally, the Secretariat has conveyed the necessary information for the adaptation of the exporting tools of GRIN-Global to facilitate users to compile with their reporting obligations as providers of material when using a SMTA.

### **3. Genetic Level Information**

39. The effective use of crop genetic resources stored in genebanks by breeding programmes is limited and the considerable costs and the slow path at which traditional germplasm characterization has been done for many years, are a limitation to their use. Nowadays, the use of molecular markers and other technologies offers additional opportunities for the use of crop genetic resources held in worldwide collections. The cheaper and quicker genotyping of germplasm accessions in recent years allows for the examination of genetic relationships and sampling of core collections representative of the allelic richness of the genebanks.

40. In this scenario, the core collections can be used for intensive phenotypic evaluation of traits of agronomic importance and re-sequencing of candidate genes associated with their control. Moreover, single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) variation between the accessions of the collection can be associated with phenotypic variation. The integration of genomic technology

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<sup>15</sup> At the end of first phase of the project in 2011, its database contained around 2.33 million of records imported from EURISCO, SINGER and GRIN, mainly.

<sup>16</sup> Since version 1.5, Grin Global server (GG Server) and Curator Tool (CT) components are released with separated numbers. At the time of preparation of this document, the latest server release which includes the several schema changes is 1.6.4 and the Curator Tool release is 1.8.4.



and the characterization of germplasm in genebanks and research programmes will play a key role in the sustainable conservation and increased use of crop genetic resources.<sup>17</sup>

41. The use of next-generation sequencing (NGS) and other technologies in plant breeding is leading to the explosion of new data and technologies. The ability to create inbred lines and easily share seed stocks makes of crops a potential exemplar for large-scale genome annotation by association, with the same genotypes easily scored for multiple phenotypes. Other recent developments include new efforts in 'industrial-grade' phenotyping (employing robotics, satellites and even military-style drones) and advances in techniques that have allowed the molecular dissection of the specialized cells that produce useful plant products.<sup>18</sup>

42. Any attempts to develop a solid global information system will have to take into account that the scale of sequence and other data accumulation in plant genomics necessitates the development of novel, highly automated, scalable, comprehensive, and accurate approaches to genome annotation. To find feasible solutions for accurately predicting the expressed protein-coding gene transcriptome from plant genome sequences a collaborative effort is needed and expertise within a wide range of fields, including genomics, molecular biology, bioinformatics, statistics, machine learning, high performance computing, and software engineering.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV. THE PROCESS AND WAY FORWARD

43. The development of the Global Information System, based on existing information systems, will require the development of strategic partnerships. It is envisaged that the future work of the Secretariat will not be dealing just with pure information in the form of data and records, but it will encompass the following areas of work:

44. Identification and connection of several types of data and records across different databases and systems, like those listed in section II of this document. This activity will imply the development of partnerships and data agreements, the existence of a minimum level of cyber infrastructure, the improvement or adaptation of standards and data exchange protocols, the use of new software and tools and the adaptation of existing ones.

45. Existing information systems will need further improvement as to facilitate timely and easy access to required information. Efforts to make information meaningful, manageable and useful for the conservation of plant genetic resources, their transfer and sustainable use at local, national and international level are also of utmost importance

46. All these concerted efforts will require a governance system, under the direct guidance of the Governing Body of the International Treaty, able to make recommendations and provide advice also during the inter-sessional periods.

47. Since the last Session of the Governing Body, a number of Contracting Parties have expressed interest in providing financial support for the further development of the Global Information System in the context of Articles 17, 12.3.b and 13.2.a.

48. The development of the Global System will also take into account the Clearing House Mechanism of the CBD and will seek cooperation in the context of the ongoing Memorandum of Cooperation. In particular, it will explore cooperation with the CBD Secretariat on information

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<sup>17</sup> The Role of Biotechnology in Exploring and Protecting Agricultural Genetic Resources, FAO, 2006. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/a0399e/a0399e00.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> For a range of sample options see: <http://genomebiology.com/2012/13/1/311>

<sup>19</sup> Plant GDB Portal, <http://www.plantgdb.org/site/>

sharing and new ways to promote free and open access to data and information for conservation purposes.<sup>20</sup>

49. During the present biennium the Secretariat has received funding from the Government of Spain to work on the development of the information technology tools in support of the Multilateral System and at the time of preparation of this paper, the Secretariat is about to conclude an agreement to obtain financial support to carry out a few selected activities listed in the vision paper presented to the Governing Body at its Fourth Session.

50. Although the level of funding for these activities is still modest compared to the initially estimated level it will allow the Secretariat to launch a multilingual survey on the Global Information System, to elaborate a number of background study papers and the organization of an expert consultation. All these activities are foreseen to be carried out with relevant networks, national and international organizations.

51. In this context, an expert Consultation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (COGIS-PGRFA) in the framework of Article 17 of the International Treaty would set up a process to allow representatives from Contracting Parties of all the regions of FAO as well as recognized experts from international organizations and networks working in this field to advise the Secretary on the analysis of the current situation and to provide inputs for the elaboration of a strategy and a draft programme of activities for the consideration of the Governing Body at its next Session.

## I. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

52. The Governing Body is invited to consider for adoption the *Draft Resolution on the Development of the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources in the Context of Article 17* contained in the *Appendix* to this document.

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<sup>20</sup> In line with Decision X/15 of the Conference of the Parties and taking into consideration the updated Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

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**DRAFT RESOLUTION \*\*/2013****DEVELOPMENT OF THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES IN THE CONTEXT OF ARTICLE 17 OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY**

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**THE GOVERNING BODY,**

**Recalling** that Article 17 of the Treaty calls for Contracting Parties to cooperate for the development of a global information system to facilitate the exchange of information, on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;

**Recognizing** that such exchange of information will contribute to sharing of benefits;

**Recalling** that cooperation will be sought with the Clearing House Mechanism of the Convention of Biological Diversity;

**Noting** that early warning on hazards that threaten the efficient maintenance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture should be provided with a view to safeguarding the genetic material;

**Recalling** that Contracting Parties shall cooperate with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the FAO in its periodic reassessment of the state of the worlds' plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;

**Noting** the work already done by the Secretariat in the establishment of the information technology systems and tools in support of the Multilateral System of the Treaty and that the development of Article 17 should be consistent with Article 12.3b.

Hereby,

1. **Thanks** the Government of Spain for the contribution towards the establishment of the initiative CAPFITOGEN in the context of Article 17 and **requests** the Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to make the tools accessible in other languages and in other regions;
2. **Welcomes** the efforts of the Secretariat to coordinate and improve information systems documenting plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, based on existing information systems;
3. **Requests** the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration with relevant FAO departments and all other stakeholders to facilitate their contribution to the continuous development of the Global Information System in the context of Article 17 of the Treaty and to increase efforts for promoting greater access to relevant information systems by Contracting Parties and other relevant stakeholders;
4. **Stresses** the importance to build upon the experiences accumulated by the Convention of Biological Diversity in the establishment and development of the Clearing House Mechanism, and **requests** the Secretary to explore cooperation with the Secretariat of the CBD on information sharing and on studying new ways to promote free and open access to data and information for conservation purposes;
5. **Requests** the Secretary, subject to the available resources, to call for an expert consultation on the Global Information System of Article 17 with the terms of reference contained in the Annex to this Resolution and to report to the next Session;

6. **Requests** the Secretary to conduct and publish the necessary background study papers, in cooperation with Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders and subject to availability of resources, an online survey on the major components of the Global Information System;
7. **Requests** the Secretary to prepare, based on the inputs of the expert consultation, a detailed and realistic work programme for the Global Information System in line with Article 17;
8. **Encourages** Contracting Parties, non-Contracting Parties, relevant stakeholders and funding mechanisms to provide financial support for the development of the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

*Annex*

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**CONSULTATION ON THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON PGRFA IN THE  
CONTEXT OF ARTICLE 17 OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY**

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The Consultation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (COGIS-PGRFA) in the framework of Article 17 of the International Treaty is an international platform that gathers representatives from Contracting Parties of all regions, and experts from international organizations and networks working in this field, and other relevant stakeholders and recognized experts.

*Composition*

In addition to the staff of the Secretariat, the Consultation will be composed of up to 35 experts, taking into account stakeholders and regional balance, and including representatives of FAO, the IARCs of the CGIAR, the Global Crop Diversity Trust, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the private sector and farmers' organizations.

All the members will serve in their personal capacity. The work of the consultation will be coordinated by the Secretariat.

*Scope and Objectives of the Consultation*

The Consultation serves as an *ad hoc* coordination mechanism and advises the Secretary in the development of proposals for the effective establishment of the Global Information System to promote and facilitate the exchange of information and services on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to PGRFA. The Consultation will:

- (i) Facilitate the assessment of needs and advise the Secretary on the identification of activities and priorities for information exchange;
- (ii) Conduct a review of major ongoing initiatives, projects and programmes at national, regional and international levels of relevance for the development of Article 17 of the International Treaty;
- (iii) Identify information gaps on scientific, technical and environmental matters on PGRFA;
- (iv) Identify best practices and appropriate methodologies for the strengthening of an effective global information system;
- (v) Advise the Secretariat in the drafting of a six-year programme of work for the Global Information System in line with Article 17 for the consideration of the Governing Body at its Sixth Session.