



The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



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Item 12 of the Provisional Agenda

FIFTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Muscat, Oman, 24-28 September 2013

COOPERATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Note by the Secretary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. *At its Fourth Session, the Governing Body requested the Secretary to report to its next session on relevant activities undertaken to maintain, strengthen and extend the partnerships, synergies, and cooperation under Resolution 8/2011, including with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission).*
2. *This document summarizes developments relevant to the cooperation with the Commission since the Fourth Session, and refers, in particular, to invitations of the Commission addressed to the Governing Body. It then provides a summary of activities that may contribute to maintain, strengthen and extend the partnership, synergies and cooperation between the two bodies. The Governing Body may wish to take note of the developments and activities reported.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Governing Body has stressed the necessity of ensuring close and effective cooperation with the Commission. At its Second Session, it adopted a *Joint Statement of Intent for Cooperation*¹ with the Commission. The statement addresses the cooperation between the Governing Body and the Commission and between their Secretariats.
2. At its Third Session, the Governing Body encouraged close cooperation between the Commission and the Governing Body that may gradually lead to an agreed functional division of tasks and activities between the Commission and the Governing Body within the terms of the Treaty.² The Governing Body, at its Fourth Session, also requested the Secretary to provide, in collaboration with the Secretary of the Commission, a paper on the legal, administrative and financial implications of transferring activities or tasks related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture from the Commission to the Treaty. The document IT/GB-5/13/12 *Transfer of activities or tasks from the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to the Governing Body: Legal, Administrative and Financial Implications* provides more information on this matter.
3. At its Fourth Session, the Governing Body requested the Secretary to continue pursuing initiatives for coordination and cooperation with the Commission, including through the convening of joint Bureau meetings. It also requested the Secretary to report to the Governing Body at its Fifth Session on relevant activities undertaken to maintain, strengthen and extend the partnerships, synergies, and cooperation under Resolution 8/2011, including the with the Commission.³
4. The Governing Body may wish to take note of the activities reported in this document and consider draft elements of a Resolution on cooperation with the Commission since the last Session of the Governing Body, contained in the *Appendix* to this document. The Governing Body may also wish to consider integrating such elements into the Resolution related to cooperation with other bodies and International Organizations.

II. PROGRESS MADE BY THE COMMISSION RELEVANT TO GOVERNING BODY SINCE ITS FOURTH SESSION

5. The Commission has met twice since the Fourth Session of the Governing Body. The Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission was held from 18 to 22 July 2011,⁴ and the Fourteenth Regular Session was held from 15 to 19 April 2013.⁵ At both sessions, the Commission addressed issues relevant to the work of the Governing Body.

Adoption of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

6. Through the adoption of Resolution 1/2011, the Commission agreed on the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA). The Commission emphasized the essential role of the Second GPA for the implementation of the

¹ *Joint Statement of Intent for Cooperation between the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. CGRFA-12/09/Report, Appendix H.

² Resolution 7/2009, paragraph 3.

³ Resolution 8/2011.

⁴ CGRFA-13/11/Report, *Report of the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/cgrfa-meetings/cgrfa-comm/thirteenth-reg/en/>

⁵ CGRFA-14/13/Report, *Report of the Fourteenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/cgrfa-meetings/cgrfa-comm/fourteenth-reg/en/#c160710>

International Treaty.⁶ The Second GPA was subsequently adopted by the FAO Council in November 2011.⁷

7. The Second GPA provides “an important internationally agreed framework for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. The Second GPA is a supporting component of the International Treaty as per its Article 14 and its implementation will be an essential contribution to achieving the objectives of the International Treaty.”⁸

8. According to the Second GPA, “overall progress on the implementation of the rolling Second GPA and the related follow-up processes will be monitored and guided by governments and other FAO Members through the Commission. In order to discharge this function, the Commission will plan the review of the implementation of the Second GPA as well as the review of the Second GPA itself within its Multi-Year Programme of Work, in close cooperation with the Governing Body of the International Treaty.”⁹ The Second GPA also states that:

“International cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA should be strengthened, in particular to support and complement the efforts of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The Governing Body of the International Treaty will play a key role in this regard. The extent to which developing countries and countries with economies in transition will effectively meet their commitments under the Second GPA will largely depend on the effective implementation of the International Treaty and its Funding Strategy.”¹⁰

“Through the monitoring of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty, the Governing Body will be able to monitor resources available for the implementation of the Second GPA. The priorities for support under the Funding Strategy are the priority activities of the rolling GPA. The monitoring of the Funding Strategy covers resources under the Benefit-sharing Fund as well as resources not under the Governing Body’s direct control.”¹¹

9. The Commission agreed to undertake, at its Fifteenth Regular Session, an assessment of the achievements, the gaps and the financial and other needs for the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action, in accordance with its mandate and the mandate of the Governing Body; this review should take into consideration the report on the implementation of the International Treaty and address additional needs related to the implementation of the Second GPA.¹²

10. Through Resolution 1/2011,¹³ the Commission invited the Governing Body,

- to provide, in its review of the report on the implementation of the Funding Strategy, an assessment of its achievements, the gaps and the financial and other needs for the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action, in order to strengthen the Funding Strategy, in particular the Benefit Sharing Fund;
- to inform the Commission of the progress achieved, at its Fourteenth Regular Session;
- to inform the Commission, at its Fifteenth Regular Session, of the results of the assessment as referred to above.

11. As the Commission’s Fourteenth Regular Session was held prior to the Governing Body’s Fifth Session, the Governing Body was not in a position to provide information on the assessment as referred to above to the Commission’s Fourteenth Regular Session. However, the Governing

⁶ CGRFA-13/11/Report, paragraph 22.

⁷ CL 143/REP, paragraph 43.

⁸ *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, para. 313.

⁹ *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, para. 315.

¹⁰ *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, para. 320.

¹¹ *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, para. 321.

¹² Commission Resolution 1/2011, paragraph 3.

¹³ CGRFA-13/11/Report, Appendix B.

Body could provide such information to the Commission's Sixteenth Regular Session, when the Commission will consider an assessment of the implementation of the Second GPA.¹⁴

Targets and indicators for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture

12. At its Fourteenth Regular Session, the Commission revised and adopted the indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA and adopted three targets for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.¹⁵ It requested FAO to apply the indicators, revise them, taking their usefulness into account, and report to the Commission, at its next session, accordingly. The Commission also requested FAO to finalize a Reporting Format for monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA, taking into account the revised indicators.

Draft guidelines for national plant genetic resources strategies

13. The Commission, at its last session, expressed its appreciation for FAO's assistance to countries in developing national plant genetic resources strategies, best practices and tools for the implementation of the Second GPA. It requested FAO to prepare draft guidelines for national plant genetic resources strategies for review by the Commission's Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources) and the Commission, at their next sessions.¹⁶

Preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*

14. According to Article 17.3 of the International Treaty, Contracting Parties shall cooperate with the Commission in its periodic assessment 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.

15. The Commission, at its Thirteenth Regular Session, agreed that, at its Fourteenth Regular Session, it would review the preparatory process for *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Third Report). At its Fourteenth Regular Session, the Commission endorsed the proposed timeline for the preparation of the Third Report requested FAO to provide a detailed outline of the Third Report, including suggested chapters and thematic areas, as well as a revised estimated budget indicating Regular Programme contributions, to the Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources and the Commission at their next sessions. The Commission stressed that the monitoring of the Second GPA and the preparation of the Third Report should be fully integrated. It invited FAO to engage with relevant international organizations to ensure their participation in the preparation of the Third Report from an early stage and invited donors to provide the necessary extra-budgetary resources to facilitate the preparatory process.

Finalization and endorsement of *Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*

16. The Commission considered draft revised Genebank Standards, as prepared by FAO in cooperation with the International Treaty, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and other relevant international institutions, at its Thirteenth and at its Fourteenth Regular Sessions. In response to the Commission's request, FAO broadened the scope of the Genebank Standards which originally covered only non-orthodox seeds, by adding standards for field genebanks and *in vitro*/ cryopreservation genebanks which conserve plants that produce non-orthodox seeds (also known as recalcitrant or intermediate seeds) and/or are propagated vegetatively. At its Fourteenth Regular Session, the Commission endorsed the

¹⁴ CGRFA14/13/Report, paragraph 101 & CGRFA-14/13/21, Table 1.

¹⁵ CGRFA-14/13/Report, *Appendix C*.

¹⁶ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 99.

Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, taking into account their voluntary nature.¹⁷

Global coordination of *in situ* conservation and on-farm management

17. The Commission has repeatedly emphasized the importance of *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources. At its Thirteenth Regular Session, the Commission reiterated the need for greater attention to crops essential for food security and on-farm management of PGRFA and requested FAO and the Governing Body of the International Treaty to support work in these areas. The Commission recognized the importance of establishing a global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA, and requested FAO to elaborate on the means and opportunities for such a global network for the Commission's consideration.¹⁸ In response to the Commission's request, FAO held consultations with partners, including the Secretariat of the International Treaty, to explore means and opportunities for a global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA.

18. At its Fourteenth Regular Session, the Commission requested FAO to prepare a concept note detailing the governance, structure, functions and financial implications of the establishment of either a global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management, or two networks separately addressing these areas, for consideration by the Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources and the Commission at their next regular sessions. The Commission also stressed the importance of establishing genetic reserves for *in situ* conservation of priority crop wild relatives (CWR), which in some circumstances could also include traditional cultivars, and requested FAO to consider providing technical support.

Capacity-building, including strengthening plant breeding and seed systems

19. The Commission requested FAO to continue collaborating with partners in capacity development in the areas of plant breeding and seed systems; it stressed the importance of implementing these efforts in synergy with the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of the International Treaty.¹⁹

Draft Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation

20. The Commission, at its last session, requested its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources to review the *Draft Guide for National Seed Policy Formulation*, for consideration by the Commission at its Fifteenth Regular Session.²⁰ The Seventh Session of the Working Group will be held in 2014.

Access and Benefit-sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

21. The Commission established at its Thirteenth Regular Session an Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and agreed to consider the need for, and modalities of, access and benefit-sharing arrangements for genetic resources for food and agriculture, at its Fourteenth Regular Session. The Ad Hoc Working Group held its first session in Svalbard, Norway, from 11 to 13 September 2012.

22. In response to recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group and in considering the need for, and modalities of, access and benefit-sharing arrangements for genetic resources for food and agriculture, the Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session

- invited the Governing Body, in its continued governance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, to continue to closely coordinate with the Commission, in order to

¹⁷ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 102 ; CGRFA-14/13/22.

¹⁸ CGRFA-13/11/Report, paragraph 41.

¹⁹ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 98.

²⁰ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 98.

address in a complementary way the distinctive features and specific uses of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, especially in light of the development of access and benefit-sharing measures at both national and international level;

- encouraged countries that have not done so, to consider the option of ratifying or acceding to the International Treaty as soon as possible and to promote its full implementation; and
- requested its Secretary to collaborate with the Secretary of the International Treaty in the development of awareness-raising activities and targeted capacity-building and technical assistance activities.²¹

23. The Commission put in place a process the output of which are to be *Draft Elements to Facilitate Domestic Implementation of Access and Benefit-Sharing for Different Subsectors of Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, taking into account relevant international instruments of Access and Benefit-sharing. These draft elements would be voluntary tools to assist national governments, not new international access and benefit-sharing instruments. They will build on existing international practices, initiatives, and *instruments relevant to all subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture access and benefit-sharing, as well as on relevant work under the International Treaty*, and will be provided to the Commission at its next session for its consideration.²²

Strategic Plan for the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture 2014-2023

24. At its Fourteenth Regular Session, the Commission adopted the *Strategic Plan for the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture 2014-2023*²³ as the planning and implementation framework to assist in the implementation of the Commission's Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW). The *Strategic Plan* notes that the *Statement of Intent for Cooperation* contributes to the effective implementation of the Commission's MYPOW by enhancing synergies between the programmes of work of the different bodies.

Climate change and genetic resources for food and agriculture

25. The Commission, at its Thirteenth Regular Session, agreed on the need for a roadmap or work programme on climate change and genetic resources for food and agriculture. It requested its Secretary to advance and develop the work programme and requested FAO to strengthen capacity-building activities, to assist countries in the management of genetic resources for food and agriculture for adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change. At its Fourteenth Regular Session, the Commission adopted its Programme of Work on Climate Change and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture²⁴ and requested its Secretary to initiate its implementation and to report on progress in its implementation to the Commission's next session.²⁵ According to the Work Programme, the Commission's Working Groups will develop guidelines for the integration of genetic-diversity considerations into climate change adaptation planning.

Preparation of *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*

26. The Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session, requested FAO to prepare *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, for consideration at its Sixteenth Regular Session. It stressed that the process for preparing *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* should be based on information from country reports and should also draw on thematic studies, reports from international organizations and inputs from other relevant stakeholders, including centres of excellence from developing countries. It stressed that *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* should focus on the interactions between

²¹ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 40

²² CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 40.

²³ CGRFA-14/13/Report, *Appendix I*.

²⁴ CGRFA-14/13/Report, *Appendix D*.

²⁵ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 36.

sectors and on cross-sectoral matters, taking full advantage of existing information sources, including sectoral assessments. It also suggested that priority be given to key supplementary information not available in existing sources.²⁶

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE TREATY SECRETARIAT IN SUPPORT OF THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION

27. The following paragraphs provide a sample of diverse and salient activities carried out by the Secretariat of the International Treaty since the last Session of the Governing Body in support of the work of the Commission:

- The Secretariat of the International Treaty participated in technical consultations held by FAO in collaboration with Bioversity International and the International Treaty on the Draft Genebank Standards. In order to ensure a thorough review of the Genebank Standards, national focal points, including those for the International Treaty, were invited to provide comments and inputs.
- The Secretariat of the International Treaty contributed to the revision of the indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA and to the development of targets for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. The Secretariat also participated in the global expert consultation on the draft targets and revised indicators, which FAO convened in collaboration with the Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Tecnología Agraria y Alimentaria (INIA), on 24 to 26 April 2012 in Madrid, Spain.
- The Secretariat of the International Treaty supported the Secretariat of the Commission through a temporary and part-time secondment of a Treaty-support Officer for the preparation and running of the First Session of the *Ad Hoc* Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
- The Secretariat of the International Treaty exchanged information and knowledge regarding the operations of the Benefit-sharing Fund and, thus, contributed to the implementation of the Funding Strategy of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources. Information was provided on administrative and operational processes related to the preparation of templates for proposals and project agreements, as well as lessons learned regarding the Operational Procedures of the Benefit-sharing Fund, in particular the screening of pre-proposals and the appraisal of proposals.
- The Secretariat of the International Treaty has actively collaborated in FAO programmes, projects and activities, related to capacity-building for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, mainly at regional level.
 - In the context of Article 17 of the Treaty, the Secretariat of the Treaty collaborates with FAO, and with funding and support from the Government of Spain, to develop information and analysis tools and to strengthen the technical capacity of national programmes on plant genetic resources in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region. A series of capacity building activities led to a workshop in Bogota, Colombia, from 19 to 22 March 2013, 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. Capacity-building on the monitoring of the Second Global Plan of Action and related targets and indicators was facilitated through these activities.

²⁶ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 14.

- The Treaty Secretariat conveyed information on FAO's World Information Sharing Mechanism and the implementation of the second Global Plan of Action to representatives of ministries of environment and agriculture of the Pacific island countries during the "South Pacific Access and Benefit Sharing Workshop" held in Savaii (Samoa) in May 2012.

The Treaty Secretariat also cooperates with AGP and decentralized FAO Offices in other capacity-building activities related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. For example, the Government of Japan is currently providing financial support for a project in which FAO's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has a leading role to enhance the understanding and implementation of the Multilateral System of the International Treaty.

28. Building on the successful collaboration between the Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Commission and the FAO, collaboration will continue with a view to strengthening collaboration at all levels in support of capacity building for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Capacity-building efforts will enhance the understanding, ratification and implementation of the International Treaty as well as strengthen the implementation of the second Global Plan of Action.

IV. POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF A DECISION BY THE GOVERNING BODY

29. The Governing Body is invited to review and consider for adoption the elements of a draft Resolution contained in the *Appendix* to this document.

APPENDIX

DRAFT ELEMENTS OF A RESOLUTION: COOPERATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**THE GOVERNING BODY,**

Recalling that the Governing Body has encouraged a close cooperation between the Commission and the Governing Body and has adopted a *Joint Statement of Intent for Cooperation*²⁷ with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission);

Recalling that the Governing Body, at its Fourth Session, requested the Secretary to continue pursuing initiatives of coordination and cooperation with the Commission,

- i. **Welcomes** the *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second Global Plan of Action)* as adopted by the FAO Council, at its Hundred and Forty-third Session;
- ii. **Notes** that the Second Global Plan of Action specifies that the extent to which developing countries and countries with economies in transition will effectively meet their commitments under the *Second Global Plan of Action* will largely depend on the effective implementation of the International Treaty and its Funding Strategy;
- iii. **Notes** that the *Second Global Plan of Action* specifies that through the monitoring of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty, the Governing Body will be able to monitor resources available for the implementation of the *Second Global Plan of Action*;
- iv. **Welcomes** the invitation by the Commission to provide, in its report of the implementation of the Funding Strategy, an assessment of achievements, the gaps and financial and other needs for the implementation of the *Second Global Plan of Action* and **notes** that it will inform the Commission of the progress achieved, at the Commission's Sixteenth Regular Session;
- v. **Welcomes** the invitation from the Commission to support work in the area of on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and **invites** the Commission to take into account the work being carried on by the Governing Body in this area, and further **requests** that work in preparation of a global network be coordinated with the Secretariat of the Governing Body;
- vi. **Welcomes** the invitation by the Commission to the Governing Body, in its continued governance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, to continue to closely coordinate with the Commission, in order to address in a complementary way the distinctive features of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, especially in the light of the development of access and benefit-sharing measures at both national and international levels and **requests** the Secretary to cooperate with the Secretary of the Commission in the development of awareness-raising activities and targeted capacity-building and technical assistance activities at national level with regard to access and benefit-sharing for different subsectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture;

²⁷ *Joint Statement of Intent for Cooperation between the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. CGRFA-12/09/Report, Appendix H.

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- vii. **Requests** the Secretary and the Chair of the Governing Body and, as necessary, the Bureau to maintain contact between sessions with their respective counterparts, in order to promote synergy in the implementation of the programmes of work of the two bodies, including in the area of access and benefit-sharing;
 - viii. **Welcomes** the *Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* as endorsed by the Commission, at its Fourteenth Regular Session;
 - ix. **Requests** the Secretary to continue providing information to the Commission on the importance of ongoing work of the Governing Body that are supportive to the work of the Commission, and **invites** the Commission to enhance synergies and avoid duplication of efforts;
 - x. **Requests** the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration with the Secretary of the Commission to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies, and with the FAO technical services and decentralized offices to support of capacity building for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, in particular at regional level.