



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



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

# **Africa Regional Training on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of PGRFA and Farmers' Rights**

**29 July –1 August 2019**

**Le NdiambourHotel,**

**Dakar, Senegal**

**Opening Remarks**  
**Kent Nnadozie**  
**Secretary, ITPGRFA**

- Distinguished Officials from the Government of Senegal, Mr Mamadou Diallo, Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment,
- Dr Robert Guei, Sub Regional Coordinator for West Africa and FAO Representative in Senegal,
- National Focal Points and representatives from Contracting Parties in Africa, non- Contracting Parties,
- representatives from the different civil society groups and farmers' organizations,

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to welcome you to this Regional Training Workshop on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources and Farmers' Rights.

I would like to first thank the Governments of Italy and Senegal the generous support in making this workshop possible.

To my colleagues in the FAO Sub Regional Office for West Africa, Dr Robert Guei and his staff, for their excellent support and facilitation of this event, thank you very much.

This is first time the Secretariat is holding this kind of Training Workshop in the Africa region, and we are looking forward to your active participation, and one of the major aims is to raise the overall awareness about the Treaty, in particular on the issues related to Sustainable Use and Farmers' Rights.

The International Treaty aims to ensure that the wealth of the world's food crop diversity is **conserved, shared and sustainably used**, so that farmers can continue to grow crops to feed their families and the world.

As the first legally-binding international instrument that specifically acknowledges the tremendous contributions of **indigenous communities and farmers** to the development and management of plant genetic resources over millennia, the International Treaty is leading the way on **Farmers' Rights**, and encourages all Contracting Parties to recognize and protect the rights of indigenous and local farming communities and smallholder farmers.

It is quite crucial to continue to conserve and sustainably use the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, as well as, to pay tribute to farmers conserving and sustaining crop diversity.

Recently, during the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity held in Ghana, FAO launched the **Africa Regional Synthesis for the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture**. This regional synthesis focuses on increasing awareness on the importance of biodiversity to food and agriculture in Africa, as well as gathering evidence of threats and challenges of biodiversity loss.

The Synthesis indicates that there is a great deal of scope for improvements to biodiversity-related policies and programmes, whether by ensuring a greater focus on links to food and agriculture, improving cross-sectoral cooperation, deepening stakeholders involvement or strengthening implementation capacity. Having said that, it calls for every one, individuals, governments, and all stakeholders --- to improve the use and conservation of Africa's biodiversity for food and agriculture, and to safeguard the rich biodiversity of the continent.

From the report, we are relying on fewer and fewer crops and varieties. Every loss of a food crop variety further weakens our food basket, and the diversity of the basis for our nutrition. This trend has to be reversed now late. **Conserving PGRFA diversity is a must for Africa's future food security.**

**Plant genetic resources** are a public good that benefits the global community. And we must work together to protect this invaluable and irreplaceable crop biodiversity.

All of you are, in one way or another, working towards our common goal of conserving and sustainably using our crop diversity. We are proud to have you with us in these important efforts. And, I would like to particularly acknowledge and express gratitude for the enormous contributions of local communities and small-scale family farmers upon whom the whole world depends for our food and nutrition.

This year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the entry-into-force of the International Treaty.

Over the years, the International Treaty has become **invaluable in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA**, working with countries and partner organizations around the world to **conserve and sustainably use** the world's precious plant genetic resources – both in the form of seeds of plants that provide food and nutrition, and in the vital information pertaining to seeds.

This Africa Regional Training Workshop is an important opportunity to exchange new ideas and learn from each other's experiences and best practices, both on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, and about how best to mainstream Farmers' Rights in your national contexts.

My colleagues from the Secretariat are here and will, over the next few days, be leading this Workshop. We hope this will help you better implement the provisions of the International Treaty in your home countries.

I would like to thank you each of you for your efforts, and to particularly thank Dr Robert Guei, his team and my team for helping make this Training Workshop for the Africa Region a reality.

I wish you a fruitful Training Workshop.

Thank you.