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Item 6.2 of the Provisional Agenda

COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Twelfth Regular Session

Rome, 19-23 October 2009

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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Appendix: Draft Statutes of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission), at its Eleventh Regular Session, approved the inclusion in its Multi-Year Programme of Work of *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*. It noted that the preparatory process, including the possibility of establishing an *ad hoc* intergovernmental technical working group, would be presented and discussed at its Twelfth Regular Session, with a view to considering *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* at its Fourteenth Regular Session.¹ Moreover, the Commission “agreed to consider at its next Session the establishment of an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources, to succeed the Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources.”²

2. Recognizing the importance of forest genetic resources and the importance of their sound management, the Committee on Forestry, at its Nineteenth Session, in March 2009, supported the recommendation of both the Commission and the Panel of Experts on Forest Genetic Resources, that FAO prepare a report on *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*, which would serve as a reference for action at the national, regional and global levels.³ The Committee on Forestry further endorsed, at its Nineteenth Session, the new FAO Strategy for Forests and Forestry with the addition of specific reference to forest genetic resources in the sixth Organizational Result, together with the inclusion of a reference to work directed towards supporting innovation in the fifth Organizational Result.⁴

3. This document briefly introduces the statutory role, function and *modus operandi* of intergovernmental technical working groups of the Commission, and explains the procedure through which a new working group may be established. The document also describes the role and mandate of the Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources and provides the report by the Director-General on the programme, financial and administrative implications of establishing an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources.

4. At its Twenty-eighth Session in October 1995, the FAO Conference broadened the mandate of the Commission to cover all aspects of genetic resources with relevance to food and agriculture. The Conference further agreed that the Commission should be assisted by geographically-balanced sectoral working groups of an intergovernmental technical nature. Pending the establishment of such working groups, the relevant technical Committees of the Council and other relevant technical bodies should continue their work on specialized areas of biodiversity.⁵

5. Paragraph 3 of the Statutes of the Commission provides:⁶

- (i) The Commission may establish intergovernmental technical working groups (“Sectoral Working Groups”), with appropriate geographical balance, to assist it in areas of plant, animal, forestry and fisheries genetic resources.
- (ii) The purpose of the Sectoral Working Groups shall be to review the situation and issues related to agrobiodiversity in the areas under their respective competences,

¹ CGRFA-11/07/Report, paragraph 55.

² CGRFA-11/07/Report, paragraph 103.

³ COFO-2009/REP, paragraph 17.

⁴ COFO-2009/REP, paragraph 18.

⁵ C-1995 28th, Report § 65-68.

⁶ CGRFA-12/09/Inf.2.

to advise and make recommendations to the Commission on these matters and to consider the progress made in implementing the Commission's programme of work, as well as any other matters referred to them by the Commission.

- (iii) The composition and terms of reference for each Sectoral Working Group shall be established by the Commission.

6. By paragraph 6 of the Commission's Statutes, the establishment of any Sectoral Working Group or other Subsidiary Body shall be subject to the determination by the Director-General that the necessary funds are available in the relevant chapter of the budget of the Organization or from extra-budgetary sources. Before taking any decision involving expenditures in connection with the establishment of Subsidiary Bodies, the Commission shall have before it a report from the Director-General on the programme, administrative and financial implications thereof.

II. EXISTING INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

7. At its Seventh Regular Session, in January 1997, the Commission established an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WG-PGR) and an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WG-AnGR).⁷

8. The purpose of the Commission's intergovernmental technical working groups is to review policy and technical issues related to their respective areas of competence, to advise and make recommendations to the Commission on these matters, and to consider the progress made in implementing the Commission's programme of work, as well as any other matters referred to them by the Commission.

9. Both Working Groups have made major contributions to the work of the Commission. The WG-PGR contributed to the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and the development of the second *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. The Working Group further provided guidance on capacity building activities of FAO regarding the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and on other issues, such as the plant genetic resource networks and the *Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collecting and Transfer*.

10. The WG-AnGR actively contributed to the development of *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*. The WG-AnGR also advised the Commission on activities and programmes developed for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources* and, most recently, reviewed a draft funding strategy and draft technical guidelines prepared by FAO for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.

11. Both Working Groups are composed of 27 Member Nations, representing all seven FAO regions, which are elected at each Regular Session of the Commission. Working Group sessions are usually also attended by other Members of the Commission, as observers.

⁷ CGRFA-7/97/REP, paragraph 10.

III. FAO PANEL OF EXPERTS ON FOREST GENE RESOURCES

12. The Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources was established by the Director-General in 1968 at the request of the Fourteenth Session of the FAO Conference,⁸ with a mandate to help plan and coordinate FAO's efforts to explore, utilize and conserve the gene resources of forest trees and, in particular, help prepare detailed short- and long-term programmes of action, and to provide information to Member Governments. Its Members, appointed by the Director-General, represent various regions of the world and are experts on a broad range of technical and scientific areas in the field of forest genetic resources.

13. The Panel makes recommendations on the main focus and operational activities related to forest genetic resources of FAO, reviews work in the field of forest genetic resources worldwide and discusses priorities for action. The Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources has closely collaborated with the Commission, notably after the Committee on Forestry recommended, at its Thirteenth Session in 1997, that the Panel provide advice to the Commission in its fields of competence, noting the broadening of the Commission's mandate by the Conference.⁹

14. Should the Commission decide to establish an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources, the Director-General may wish to assess the necessity of maintaining the Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources in the future.

IV. DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S REPORT ON THE PROGRAMME, ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF ESTABLISHING AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

15. Individual 3-day meetings of the proposed Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources would incur the following estimated costs:

Direct Costs of the Meeting (interpretation, messengers)	US\$ 35,000
Document preparation	US\$ 30,000
Documentation (translation/printing)	US\$ 50,000
Total	US\$ 115,000

16. If it is decided to convene a first session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources between the Twelfth and Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission, the Director-General would need to call for extra-budgetary support, as no provision has been made in the 2010/11 Programme of Work and Budget. Provision will need to be made to support subsequent sessions, either from the Regular Programme Budget or from extra-budgetary resources, or a combination of the two sources.

⁸ C 1967/REP (14th), paragraph 245.

⁹ COFO-1997/REP, paragraph 26.

V. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

17. The Commission may wish to:
- (i) Decide whether or not it wishes to establish an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources;
 - (ii) Review the draft Statutes for an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources, as given in the *Appendix* to this document, with a view to adopting them;
 - (iii) Decide on the timing and duration of the first session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources; and
 - (iv) Call for adequate regular programme and extra-budgetary support for sessions of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources.

APPENDIX

DRAFT STATUTES OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

Article 1 - Terms of Reference

1. The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (the Working Group) shall:

- review the situation and issues related to biodiversity in the area of forest genetic resources and advise and make recommendations to the Commission on these matters;
- consider the progress made in implementing the Commission's programme of work on forest genetic resources as well as any other matters referred to the Working Group by the Commission; and
- report to the Commission on its activities.

2. In order for the Working Group to carry out this mandate, the Commission will assign specific tasks to the Working Group.

Article II - Composition

The Working Group shall be composed of twenty-seven Member Nations from the following regions:

- 5 from Africa
- 5 from Europe
- 5 from Asia
- 5 from Latin America and the Caribbean
- 3 from Near East
- 2 from Northern America
- 2 from South West Pacific.

Article III - Election and term of office of Members

The Members of the Working Group shall be elected at each regular session of the Commission and serve until the next regular session of the Commission. They shall be eligible for re-election.

Article IV - Officers

1. The Working Group shall elect its Chairperson and one or more Vice-Chairpersons from among the representatives of Members of the Working Group at the beginning of each session. These officers shall remain in office until the next session of the Working Group and be eligible for re-election.

2. The Chairperson, or a Vice-Chairperson in the absence of a Chairperson, shall preside over the meetings of the Working Group and exercise such other functions as may be required to facilitate its work.

Article V - Sessions

The Commission shall decide on the timing and duration of the sessions of the Working Group, when required. In any case, the Working Group shall hold no more than one regular session annually.

Article VI - Observers

1. Members of the Commission which are not Members of the Working Group may participate, upon request to the Commission Secretariat, in the work of the Working Group in an observer capacity.
2. The Working Group, or the bureau on behalf of the Working Group, may invite experts, as well as representatives of specialized international organizations, to attend its meetings.

Article VII - Application of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

1. The provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to all matters not specifically dealt with under the present Statutes.