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UPDATING THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission), at its Eleventh Regular Session:

- requested FAO to submit to the Commission's Twelfth Regular Session a proposed plan for the process of updating the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Global Plan of Action)*; ¹
- requested its Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group) to consider elements of a plan for updating the *Global Plan of Action*; ²
- agreed that the updated rolling *Global Plan of Action* would be considered at the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission, on the basis of the updated *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*.³

2. The current document provides a brief overview of the rolling *Global Plan of Action* as adopted by the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources (1996). The overview includes a description of the process through which the *Global Plan of Action* was developed and identifies efforts to support its implementation, including the establishment of a Facilitating Mechanism.

3. The document contains a suggested process and timeline for the review and updating of the *Global Plan of Action*, for consideration by the Commission. The proposed plan, as reviewed by the Working Group at its Fourth Session and consolidated by the Bureau of the Commission's Eleventh Regular Session, is presented to assist the Commission in its decision on the process for updating the *Global Plan of Action*.

II. BACKGROUND

Development and rationale of the current *Global Plan of Action*

4. The *Global Plan of Action* adopted in 1996, has been a framework, guide and catalyst for action with respect to plant genetic resources at the community, national, regional and international levels. It seeks to create an efficient system for the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources, through better cooperation, coordination and planning, and through the strengthening of capacities. The *Global Plan of Action* contains 20 priority activities, organised under four main groups: (i) *In situ* conservation and development; (ii) *Ex situ* conservation; (iii) Use of Plant Genetic Resources; and (iv) Institutions and capacity building.

5. The *Global Plan of Action* was developed in response to the FAO Conference and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, through Agenda 21, that 'called for the development of a periodic report on the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, which was presented at the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources.⁴ It was agreed that a rolling *Global Plan of Action* should be developed, including programmes and activities aimed at filling gaps, overcoming constraints and facing emergency situations as identified in *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, allowing countries to monitor activities, determine priorities and oversee programmes in the area of plant genetic resources.

6. A country-driven preparatory process was adopted for the development of the *Global Plan of Action*, based on the recommendations from Country Reports, sub-regional and regional

¹ CGRFA-11/07/Report, paragraph 41.

² CGRFA-11/07/Report, paragraph 43.

³ CGRFA-11/07/Report, paragraph 41.

⁴ ITCPR/96/REP

preparatory meetings. The first report on *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* provided the technical background for the development of the *Global Plan of Action*. The report was based on the information provided through an elaborate process, including over 150 Country Reports, and the results of 11 regional and sub-regional meetings. Extensive use was made of data from the FAO World Information and Early Warning System (WIEWS), and additional inputs provided by international institutions, non-governmental organizations and representatives of the private sector.

7. The resulting rolling *Global Plan of Action* was formally adopted by 150 countries through the 'Leipzig Declaration' during the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources held in Leipzig, Germany, in June 1996. It was agreed during the Leipzig Conference that the overall progress in the implementation and the related follow-up processes would be monitored and guided by the national governments and other members of FAO, through the Commission.⁵

8. The *Global Plan of Action* was endorsed by the Twenty-Ninth Session of the FAO Conference,⁶ by the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity⁷ and by the Heads of State and Governments at the FAO World Food Summit in 1997,⁸ as well as by the participants at the Global Forum on Agricultural Research Conference in 2000.⁹

9. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) refers to the *Global Plan of Action* as one of its supporting components (Article 14) and as a priority basis for its Funding Strategy (Article 17). The inclusion of the *Global Plan of Action* in the International Treaty and the establishment of its Facilitating Mechanism emphasized the need for renewed investment in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* at the national, regional and international levels, in order to contribute to food security, sustainable agricultural development and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.

Implementation and Monitoring of the *Global Plan of Action*

10. Since 1996, the *Global Plan of Action* has provided a coherent framework for the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, including institutional strengthening and capacity-building. Its development and implementation has substantially increased the understanding of the importance of plant genetic resources, and resulted in significant investments to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of these essential resources.

11. FAO hosts the Facilitating Mechanism of the *Global Plan of Action* that provides a portal with comprehensive technical information for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. The portal also contains a wide range of information on projects, activities and funding opportunities for activities that contribute to the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources.¹⁰

12. At its Seventh Regular Session, the Commission requested "that FAO play a proactive and creative role in facilitating and monitoring implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*".¹¹ In response to this request, FAO developed a new approach for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, which promotes a country-driven, participatory and capacity-building

⁵ ITCPGR/96/REP, paragraph. 21.

⁶ C 1997/Rep, Resolution 1/97.

⁷ UNEP/CBD/COP/3/11

⁸ World Food Summit Plan of Action, paragraph 24.

⁹ Dresden Declaration on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
<http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/207095/pgrfadec.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.globalplanofaction.org/>

¹¹ CGRFA-7/97/REP paragraph. 19.

process culminating in the establishment of national information-sharing mechanisms, which play an important role as monitoring tools and as components of the WIEWS.¹² FAO also developed a list of indicators and a reporting format for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.¹³

13. The Commission considered progress reports on the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* at its Eighth,¹⁴ Ninth¹⁵ and Tenth¹⁶ Regular Sessions. At its Ninth Regular Session, the Commission supported the establishment, at national level, of processes to share information among stakeholders on the implementation of the *Plan*, and supported the proposal for a pilot testing phase. The Commission also considered useful a list of indicators and a reporting format developed by the Secretariat for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, and instructed FAO to further refine them through pilot testing in a number of countries and on the basis of technical advice provided by the Commission's Working Group. The Commission stressed that the preparatory process for the second *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second Report)* "should be fully integrated with the process of monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*."¹⁷

14. At its Tenth Regular Session, the Commission reviewed progress in developing its new monitoring approach, acknowledged the successful pilot phase and its evaluation and adopted the revised indicators and reporting format for monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.¹⁸ The Commission supported the application of the new monitoring approach to all countries, in view of the integration of these monitoring activities with the preparation of the *Second Report*. It confirmed that the preparatory process for the *Second Report* should be fully integrated with the process of monitoring the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, in order to minimize the reporting burden on Members. The Commission also noted that the *Second Report* should provide a sound basis for updating the *Global Plan of Action*.

III. PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE PROCESS OF UPDATING THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

15. As a strategic framework, the *Global Plan of Action* needs to be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure that it continues to best serve country needs. The International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, in adopting the *Global Plan of Action*, confirmed the need for review and specified that "such a review should deal with progress made at national, regional and international levels in implementation, elaboration, and adjustment as appropriate, of the Plan, thus making it a 'rolling' plan as recommended in Agenda 21."¹⁹

16. At its Eleventh Regular Session, the Commission agreed that the updated *Global Plan of Action* would be considered at its Thirteenth Regular Session. The Commission requested that FAO submit to its Twelfth Regular Session a proposed plan for the process of updating the *Global Plan of Action*, and requested its Working Group to consider elements of such a plan.

17. The need for updating the *Global Plan of Action* has also been stressed by the Governing Body of the International Treaty. The Governing Body, at its First Session, defined as initial priorities of its Funding Strategy, the priority activity areas of the rolling *Global Plan of Action*, for further development by the Governing Body.²⁰ At its Second Session, in identifying the priorities for the use of resources under its direct control, the Governing Body focused, within the priority areas of the *Global Plan of Action*, on achieving benefits "in the pressing priority areas,

¹² See <http://apps3.fao.org/wiews/wiews.jsp> and www.pgrfa.org

¹³ CGRFA -10/04/Inf.5

¹⁴ CGRFA-8/99/3

¹⁵ CGRFA-9/02/6

¹⁶ CGRFA-10/04/Inf.6.

¹⁷ CGRFA-8/99/REP, paragraph. 20.

¹⁸ CGRFA-10/04, Inf.5

¹⁹ ITCPGR/96/REP, paragraph. 21.

²⁰ IT/GB-1/06/Report, Appendix F, III.4.

identified for a limited period of time.” *Annex 1* to the Funding Strategy also states that “the next iteration of the rolling *Global Plan of Action* will be important in the identification of future priorities.”²¹ The Governing Body, at its Third Session, reiterated the importance of the *Global Plan of Action* and invited the Commission, in the revision of the *Global Plan of Action*, to take into account specific issues of relevance to the International Treaty and to adequately reflect the provisions of the Treaty in the *Global Plan of Action*.²²

18. A proposed plan for the process of updating the *Global Plan of Action*, as reviewed by the Working Group and consolidated by the Bureau, is given in *Table 1* of this document. The plan mirrors the processes proposed for the updating of the *Global Plan of Action* in the document, *Draft Strategic Plan 2010-2017 for the Implementation of the Multi-Year Programme of Work*.²³

**TABLE 1: UPDATING THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION:
INDICATIVE PROCESSES AND TIMELINE REQUIRED**

Time Frame	Process
CGRFA-12 / 2009	<p><i>PRESENTATION OF THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES</i></p> <p>UPDATING THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for the process of updating <i>Global Plan of Action</i>, including consideration of options for the adoption of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i>
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional meetings to consider the update of the <i>Global Plan of Action</i> • Consultations with partners on updating of the <i>Global Plan of Action</i> • Consultation with the Secretariat of the International Treaty • Preparation of first draft updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint meeting of the Bureau of the Commission and the Bureau of the Treaty Governing Body to review the first draft of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i> • Review of the draft updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i> by the Working Group at its Fifth Session
CGRFA-13/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONSIDERATION OF THE UPDATED <i>GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION</i> FOR ADOPTION • Provide guidance with regards to the implementation and monitoring of the implementation of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i> • Review of indicators and monitoring for the implementation of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i>

²¹ IT/GB-2/07/Report, Appendix D.1.

²² GB-3 Resolution, *Cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

²³ CGRFA-12/09/04

19. The proposed plan covers the period from the Twelfth to the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission with a very compact schedule. It foresees regional meetings in 2010, organized in collaboration with relevant organizations; these meetings would review the status of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture at the regional level and identify priority activities which require updating, as well as possible gaps and needs based on the findings of the *Second Report*.

20. Two regional meetings have been held in 2009 (Near East and Latin America and the Caribbean) in collaboration with partners and with extra-budgetary resources made available by the Governments of Italy, Norway and Spain. The meeting reports of these consultations are available.²⁴ Participants of both regional meetings indicated that the priority activities, covered by the *Global Plan of Action*, should remain the main focus for future action. While new topics in the field of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture have emerged, it was considered that most of them could be incorporated into existing priority activities of the *Global Plan of Action*. For other issues, such as climate change, on the other hand, new priority activities could be considered. The regional consultations are subject to the availability of the necessary extrabudgetary resources. Funds have already been secured for a regional consultation in Asia within the ongoing regional project supported by the Government of Japan.

21. The proposed plan for the process of updating the *Global Plan of Action* includes a series of consultations with relevant partners, including international and non-governmental organizations and the private sector. In response to the Working Group's request for a "simplified approach"²⁵ to gather these inputs, it is proposed to hold such consultations primarily through e-conferences. A consultation will be held with the Secretariat of the International Treaty, to take into account specific issues of relevance to the International Treaty and to adequately reflect the provisions of the Treaty in the *Global Plan of Action*. The first draft of the updated *Global Plan of Action* will be prepared on the basis of the findings of the *Second Report* and the inputs received from the regional meetings and consultations with partners.

22. It is proposed that the first draft of the updated *Global Plan of Action* be reviewed at a joint meeting of the Bureaus of the Commission and of the Governing Body of the International Treaty. Subsequently, the draft updated *Global Plan of Action* would be submitted to the Working Group, for its consideration. The draft updated *Global Plan of Action*, as reviewed by the Working Group, would then be presented to the Commission, for its consideration at the Thirteenth Regular Session. At that Session, the Commission could provide guidance on the implementation of the updated *Global Plan of Action* and other aspects related to the financing and monitoring of its implementation.

23. The proposed plan for the process of updating the *Global Plan of Action* does not go into any detail with regard to the finalization and adoption of the updated *Global Plan of Action*. The Commission may wish to finalise and adopt the updated *Global Plan of Action*, at its Thirteenth Regular Session. Alternatively, it may request FAO to convene a Fifth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources which could finalise and adopt the updated *Global Plan of Action*. The Conference could be held after the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission. Given the financial implications of such a conference, the Commission may wish to invite governments to consider hosting it.

²⁴ CGRFA/WG-PGR-4/09/Inf.3

²⁵ CGRFA/WG-PGR-4/09/REPORT, paragraph 21.

IV. REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE PROCESS FOR UPDATING THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION BY THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

24. The Working Group, at its Fourth Session, considered the proposed elements of the plan for updating the rolling *Global Plan of Action* and the proposed timeline.²⁶ It stressed the need to update the *Global Plan of Action* as a priority to respond to identified gaps and needs and noted the need to be strategic in undertaking the updating, in order to identify priorities and make effective use of financial and human resources. It recommended that the Commission encourage governments and international organizations to make available the necessary financial resources for the updating of the rolling *Global Plan of Action* in a timely manner, including resources to enable regional and other meetings.

25. The Working Group recommended that the Commission request FAO to

- update the rolling *Global Plan of Action*, according to the process and timeline proposed noting that additional information on the proposed process and estimated costs would be beneficial to the Commission in their consideration of the updating process; and
- prepare the updated rolling *Global Plan of Action* based primarily on the findings of the *Second Report*, and in particular, on the identified gaps and needs, as well as the advice received during regional meetings and consultations involving relevant stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels.

26. The Working Group recommended that the Commission encourage governments and international organizations non-governmental organizations and the private sector to provide advice and views to FAO in a timely manner, to facilitate the updating of the rolling *Global Plan of Action*; and that it request FAO to develop a simplified approach to gather inputs from these stakeholders. It also recommended that the Commission invite the Secretary of the International Treaty to actively participate in the consultation process, to ensure that specific issues of relevance are adequately taken into account, as the *Plan* is an important supporting component of the International Treaty.

27. As requested by the Working Group, additional information on the proposed plan, including a cost estimate, which is given in the *Appendix* of this document. The costs vary considerably depending on the number of regional consultations. No estimates are given for the convening of an International Technical Conference. It will be essential to mobilize extra-budgetary resources for the updating of the *Global Plan of Action* to complement the resources that will be made available by FAO through its Regular Programme.

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

28. The Commission may wish to

- (i) review the proposed plan for the updating of the *Global Plan of Action* given in *Table 1*;
- (ii) request FAO to prepare the updated *Global Plan of Action*, based primarily on the findings of the *Second Report*, and in particular, on the identified gaps and needs, taking into account inputs received from regional meetings and other consultations involving relevant stakeholders;

²⁶ Report of the Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, CGRFA-12/09/7.

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- (iii) invite governments and international organizations to make available the necessary financial resources for the updating of the rolling *Global Plan of Action* in a timely manner, including resources to enable regional and other meetings;
 - (iv) invite the Secretary of the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to actively participate in the process so that specific issues of relevance to the Treaty are taken into account and the provisions of the Treaty are adequately reflected in the updated *Global Plan of Action*;
 - (v) encourage relevant international intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to contribute to the updating of the rolling *Global Plan of Action*;
 - (vi) request its Secretary to organize with the Secretary of the International Treaty a joint meeting of the Bureaus of the Commission of the International Treaty to *inter alia*, review the first draft of the updated *Global Plan of Action* prior to the Thirteenth Regular Session of the Commission;
 - (vi) request the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to review the draft updated *Global Plan of Action* at its Fifth Session;
 - (vii) request FAO to convene an International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic to finalise and adopt the *Global Plan of Action* and invite governments to consider hosting the Conference.

APPENDIX

**ESTIMATED COSTS OF SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED PLAN FOR
UPDATING THE *GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION***

	Cost (USD)	Calculation	Purpose and notes
Staff costs	371,616	20 P3 officer months (USD 14,124 per month) 12 G3 general service staff months (USD 7,428 per month)	To assist secretariat with the process of updating the Plan including e-conferences, synthesis of the inputs from stakeholders, consultations, technical expert meeting and in administrative tasks.
Regional meetings	700,000	7 Regional Meetings	Two Regional Meetings have been held in 2009. Funding is available for the Regional Meeting in Asia scheduled for 2010.
Technical consultants	140,000	400 days (USD 350 per day)	To assist in the preparation of background documentation, in the preparation and running of meetings and in the consolidation of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i> .
Travel of consultants and staff	38,000		To support the development of the first draft of the updated <i>Global Plan of Action</i>
Total	1,249,616		