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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Paragraphs
I. Introduction	1–2
II. Follow-up to the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources	3–30
III. Guidance sought	31

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission), at its Fourteenth Regular Session in April 2013, considered draft strategic priorities for action on forest genetic resources and agreed on them as the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (Global Plan of Action).¹ Subsequently, the FAO Conference adopted the Global Plan of Action at its Thirty-eighth Session in June 2013.² At its Fifteenth Regular Session in January 2015, the Commission agreed on the *Strategy for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (the Implementation Strategy).³

2. This document summarizes the activities undertaken by FAO in collaboration with its partners as a follow-up to the Global Plan of Action since the Sixteenth Regular Session of the Commission in February 2017. These activities include, in particular, the preparation of the First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and the development of draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources and a draft funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

Monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

3. At its Sixteenth Regular Session, the Commission adopted targets, indicators and verifiers for forest genetic resources to be used as assessment tools for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, as well as a monitoring schedule.⁴ It requested FAO to prepare draft guidelines for the preparation of country progress reports and reporting guidelines for regional networks and international organizations. It further requested FAO to avoid duplications with existing reporting obligations for plant genetic resources under WIEWS.⁵ The Commission also encouraged countries to prepare themselves for the collection of data and information, as appropriate, to facilitate timely submission of their first progress reports.⁶

4. Early 2017, FAO prepared draft reporting guidelines, including a questionnaire and a glossary of technical terms, for the submission of country progress reports, taking into account the reporting obligations for WIEWS. As requested by the Commission,⁷ in March 2017 FAO consulted the Working Group and the National Focal Points (NFPs) on forest genetic resources, by electronic means, on the draft reporting guidelines and received comments from 11 countries.⁸ FAO also presented the reporting guidelines as well as the reporting process during regional workshops and other meetings organized in the context of the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 21 March 2017), the European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources (Rome, Italy, 5 April 2017), the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (Amsterdam, Netherlands, 30 May–2 June 2017) and the Forest Genetic Resources Working Group of the North American Forestry Commission (Provo, United States of America, 23–27 October 2017).

5. Through Circular State Letter C/CBD-7 of 22 May 2017,⁹ FAO invited Members to submit their country progress reports on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action by 31 December 2017. Countries could report through a dedicated online reporting system by completing the

¹ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 52.

² C 2013/REP, paragraph 77.

³ CGRFA-15/15/Report, Appendix E.

⁴ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 74.

⁵ World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
<http://www.fao.org/wiews/en/>

⁶ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 75.

⁷ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 75.

⁸ Australia, Brazil, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Morocco, Norway, Sweden, United States of America.

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/nr/documents/CGRFA/News/bt555e.pdf>

questionnaire made available on the Open Foris platform. To facilitate the answering of species-specific questions, the list of species reported earlier for *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* was revised to reflect recent changes in taxonomy and to exclude minor shrub species that may be considered only marginally as “forest genetic resources”. The updated list, including approximately 6 600 species, was incorporated into the online reporting system.

6. In November 2017, a total of 90 NFPs were provided with a username and a password for accessing the online reporting system. During the reporting process, the Secretariat provided, on request, technical support to the NFPs on using the online reporting system. The NFPs could also add species to the list of species in the reporting template by informing the Secretariat. The completed online questionnaire was considered as the country progress report.

7. By April 2018, a total of 38 countries and one regional network had submitted their progress reports and, based on these, FAO prepared a *Preliminary First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action* for the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (the Working Group) held in May 2018. The Working Group took note of the activities reported and acknowledged the progress made in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. It recommended that countries, regional networks and international organizations that had not yet submitted their progress reports be invited to do so by 31 August 2018. The Working Group further recommended that an updated First Report on the Implementation on the Global Plan of Action be presented to this session of the Commission for its consideration.

8. As of October 2018, a total of 44 countries had submitted their progress reports (Armenia, Australia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Poland, Sri Lanka, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America and Vanuatu). Of relevant international organizations, only Bioersity International provided a report on its contributions to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including activities of three regional networks (the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN), the Latin America Forest Genetic Resources Network (LAFORGEN) and the Sub-Saharan Forest Genetic Resources Programme (SAFORGEN)). A fourth network, the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme, also submitted its progress report.

9. Based on the additional progress reports received, the document *First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources*¹⁰ provides detailed information on the progress made by the reporting countries in implementing the Global Plan of Action and reflects the contributions of regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations. Its appendixes present the guidelines for the preparation of the country progress reports and the reporting guidelines for regional networks and international organizations, as requested by the Commission.

10. The First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action indicates that most reporting countries have a national inventory of forest genetic resources (32 out of 44 countries) as well as national *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation programmes or systems in place (38 and 32 countries, respectively). Similarly, most of the countries have a national tree seed programme (32 out of 44 countries). Concerning the extent of national coordination mechanisms and national strategies for forest genetic resources, 27 and 26 countries, respectively, reported having them. For the questions related to the state of conservation, use and development of forest genetic resources, a total of 1 145 tree and other woody species were listed in the country progress reports.

Voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources

11. At its last session, the Commission requested FAO to prepare draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources in line with the proposed outline¹¹ and taking

¹⁰ CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.1.

¹¹ CGRFA-16/17/19, *Appendix A*.

into account existing guidelines for the preparation of national forest programmes and for the formulation of forest policy to avoid duplication of work.¹²

12. The Working Group considered the draft voluntary guidelines prepared by FAO at its Fifth Session and requested the Secretariat to invite NFPs on forest genetic resources, relevant regional networks and international organizations to comment on the draft voluntary guidelines. It further requested the Secretariat to prepare, taking into account the comments received, consolidated draft voluntary guidelines for the Commission to consider at this session. Comments and/or feedback were received from the NFPs of Australia, Chile, Germany, India, Madagascar, Mexico and Spain.

13. The document *Revised draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources*¹³ presents the draft guidelines for consideration by the Commission. The revised draft guidelines aim to support countries in implementing the Global Plan of Action and to promote the integration of forest genetic resources into other relevant national instruments and strategies.

Funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

14. At its last session, the Commission considered progress made in developing the funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.¹⁴ It requested FAO to continue pursuing extra-budgetary funds, developing the funding strategy to assist countries in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and encouraging donors to provide support.¹⁵

15. FAO has continued to explore the interest of different donors to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action but so far no extra-budgetary funds have been mobilized specifically for this purpose. However, FAO supported the development of country-led projects that, while addressing broader topics, are expected to contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Currently, FAO is supporting several countries¹⁶ to implement projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that are aiming to enhance sustainable forest management or forest and landscape restoration.

16. FAO has also been accredited by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to manage its projects, and recently two proposals for large-scale GCF projects in El Salvador and Paraguay,¹⁷ including forest-related activities, were approved. Furthermore, FAO is currently supporting the development of smaller GCF Readiness projects in Burkina Faso, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Lao People's Democratic Republic¹⁸ to the GCF to enhance the contributions of forests and other land use sectors to climate change adaptation and mitigation in these countries. Additionally, FAO is supporting Chad, Cuba, The Gambia, Senegal and Sudan in developing GCF project proposals

¹² CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 73.

¹³ CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.3.

¹⁴ CGRFA-16/17/19, paragraphs 18–20.

¹⁵ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 73.

¹⁶ Forest and Landscape Restoration supporting Landscape and Livelihoods Resilience in the Central African Republic (2018–2022); Sustainable forest management to enhance the resilience of forests in China to climate change (2016–2022); Community-based Integrated Natural Resource Management in Fiji (2018–2019); Sustainable Management of Wooded Production Landscapes for Biodiversity Conservation in Haiti (2019–2023); Payment for Ecosystem Services to Support Forest Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods in Mozambique (2017–2022); Reversing Deforestation and Degradation in High Conservation Value Chilgoza Pine Forests in Pakistan (2018–2021); Enhancing Biodiversity, Ecosystem Flows, Carbon Stocks through Sustainable Forest Management and Restoration of Degraded Forestlands in the Philippines (2018–2022); Landscape Restoration for Ecosystem Functionality and Climate Change Mitigation in the Republic of São Tomé e Príncipe (2018–2023); Promoting Sustainable Forest Management and Improving Livelihoods through Integrated Land Use Planning and Forest Landscape Restoration in Sri Lanka (2018–2022); Sustainable Management of Forests in Mountain and Valley Areas in Uzbekistan (2018–2023).

¹⁷ Upscaling climate resilience measures in the dry corridor agroecosystems of El Salvador (2018–2023); Poverty, Reforestation, Energy and Climate Change (Paraguay) (2019–2023).

¹⁸ Assessing forest and land use sector opportunities in Burkina Faso to support climate change adaptation (2018–2019); Support to Congo's readiness for the GCF in the land use and forestry sector (2018–2019); Preparatory support to the NDA of Equatorial Guinea to engage with the GCF in early stages of REDD+ (2018–2019); Lao People's Democratic Republic GCF Readiness for REDD+ (2018–2020).

including activities on forests and REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the sustainable management of forests and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks).

17. The implementation of the Global Plan of Action is also being supported by other FAO projects and programmes. With funds from Norway, FAO supports the establishment of a national forest tree seed centre in Lebanon.¹⁹ Through its Technical Cooperation Programme, FAO strengthens the capacity of the Forest Research Institute in Myanmar and the agriculture sectors contributions to the National Biodiversity Action Plan in India.²⁰ Under the framework of the Action Against Desertification (AAD) initiative,²¹ FAO and its partners have reinforced national tree seed systems in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali and Niger. In November 2017, FAO and its AAD partners also organized a regional workshop in Niamey, Niger, to assess and plan for large-scale restoration efforts across 12 countries of Africa's Great Green Wall programme. Furthermore, the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism²² has continued to support restoration of degraded lands in Cambodia, Lebanon, Guatemala, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda and Uganda, and these efforts are increasingly exploring ways to enhance the production of forest reproductive material to meet the ambitious tree planting targets.

18. FAO continued developing the funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action by considering recent developments in the global framework on forests, such the adoption of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 by the UN General Assembly in 2017, and main existing financing instruments for forests. Furthermore, FAO also considered lessons learned from its past and ongoing efforts in assisting developing countries and countries with economies in transition to mobilize financial resources for sustainable forest management. The document *Global framework on forests and main forest-related financing mechanisms*²³ presents these developments and lessons learned.

19. Based on these considerations, it is likely that the establishment of a stand-alone FAO Trust Fund for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action on forest genetic resources would mobilize limited amounts of new financial resources for this work in developing countries and create considerable transaction costs. In consequence, country or regional projects on forest genetic resources funded through such a Trust Fund would be short-term and small in terms of budget. Therefore, it is unlikely that such projects would be able to achieve long-lasting impacts and improve the management of forest genetic resources in developing countries. In the face of this, an alternative approach to the Trust Fund approach is necessary.

20. The following approach is proposed for mobilizing cost-effectively financial resources for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

- i. First, for both technical and financial reasons, the proposal is to mainstream actions on the conservation and use of forest genetic resources into larger and more holistic actions that are supported by the GEF, the GCF and other multilateral financing mechanisms to enhance the implementation of sustainable forest management and forest-based adaptation and mitigation measures for climate change. This approach would also be in line with the Cancun Declaration of the 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference that urged Parties to strengthen their efforts to mainstream conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within and across various sectors, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, and tourism at all levels and scales.
- ii. Second, in parallel with the mainstreaming efforts, financial resources would be mobilized from all possible sources for strategic actions on forest genetic resources, such as capacity-

¹⁹ The establishment of a National Forest Seed Center in Lebanon (2016–2018).

²⁰ Strengthening Capacity of Forest Research Institute, Myanmar (2017–2019); Strengthening Agriculture and Allied Sector Contributions to India's National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2008 and the National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs) (2017–2019).

²¹ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/en/>

²² <http://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/en/>

²³ CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.2.

building, development of national strategies and strengthening of national tree seed systems, for example. The strategic actions should be in line with the four priority areas of the Global Plan of Action but tailored to meet specific needs and conditions of different countries and regions. This type of strategic, country-driven action on forest genetic resources would also increase the readiness of countries and their capacity to implement large-scale projects on forests.

- iii. Third, it is necessary to cooperate with relevant ongoing forest financing initiatives to *inter alia* emphasize the importance of investing in forest genetic resources, and create awareness on the fundamental role of these resources in sustainable forest management. Such cooperation should include the sharing of information on possible funding sources without duplicating efforts. As part of the Implementation Strategy of the Global Plan of Action, the Commission requested FAO to collect, maintain and regularly update on its website information on donor mandates, policies, eligibility criteria and procedures for submitting proposals for projects on forest genetic resources.²⁴ As the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) has already established the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) for a similar purpose to support the implementation of sustainable forest management, FAO could collaborate with the GFFFN to make available information on funding opportunities for forest genetic resources and thereby avoid duplication of efforts. In addition to making information available on funding sources, the GFFFN is also promoting the development of national forest financing strategies and facilitating access to existing and emerging funding sources.

21. Based on this approach, FAO prepared a draft funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Fifth Session of the Working Group. The Working Group welcomed the proposed mainstreaming of the conservation and use of forest genetic resources across more holistic actions and activities developed to strengthen the implementation of sustainable forest management and forest-based adaptation and mitigation measures against climate change through established financing mechanisms. It asked the Secretariat to ensure that the REDD+ framework will be included in the draft funding strategy. The Working Group recommended the Secretariat to prepare, based on the comments received during the Fifth Session, an updated draft of the funding strategy for consideration by the Commission at this session. The document *Updated draft Funding Strategy for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* presents the updated draft funding strategy.²⁵

Regional collaboration and networks

22. At its last session, the Commission requested FAO to continue coordinating and supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action in collaboration with regional networks on forest genetic resources.²⁶ FAO has continued its collaboration with these networks, and also plans to strengthen their role in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, subject to the availability of financial resources.

23. FAO contributed to the regional workshop organized by the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions (APAFRI) and Bioversity International for the national coordinators and other experts of the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in March 2017. Workshop participants revised the regional implementation strategy for the Global Plan of Action and drafted a new one for 2018–2022. The revised strategy was presented to the Twenty-seventh Session of the FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in October 2017.²⁷ The Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission welcomed the development of the regional strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and

²⁴ CGRFA-15/15/Report, *Appendix E*, IV.

²⁵ CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.4.

²⁶ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 73.

²⁷ FO:APFC/2017/10.

recommended that FAO continue its collaboration with APFORGEN and other relevant initiatives on forest genetic resources in the region.²⁸

24. In early 2019, Bioversity International and FAO will organize a regional workshop for the national coordinators of the Sub-Saharan Africa Forest Genetic Resources Programme (SAFORGEN). The purpose of the workshop is to review the progress made in carrying out regional activities contributing to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. During the previous SAFORGEN workshop, held in Douala, Cameroon, in 2016, the national coordinators developed a regional strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action in Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁹

25. FAO also continued its collaboration with the regional networks in Europe and North America. The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)³⁰ has incorporated relevant regional priorities of the Global Plan of Action into its current work. FAO provided inputs to the annual meeting of the Forest Genetic Resources Working Group of the North American Forestry Commission³¹ held in Provo, United States of America, in October 2017. The North American Working Group decided to identify those strategic priorities of the Global Plan of Action that are relevant for the region and work towards a regional contribution to its implementation.

Awareness-raising and information-sharing

26. FAO continued its efforts to increase international awareness of the Global Plan of Action as well as the importance of forest genetic resources. As part of the Sustainable Forest Management Toolbox initiative providing forest owners, managers and other stakeholders an easy access to relevant tools, case studies and other resources facilitating the implementation of sustainable forest management, FAO promoted modules on the conservation and management of forest genetic resources³² and the production of forest reproductive material.³³ In March 2017, FAO presented an update on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to the first annual meeting of the European Commission-funded GENTREE project³⁴ that was held in Madrid, Spain.

27. FAO organized regional meetings on agricultural biotechnologies in Asia-Pacific³⁵ and in sub-Saharan Africa³⁶ in 2017. During these regional meetings, the application of biotechnology in the forest sector for the conservation and use of forest genetic resources was also presented and discussed. For the meeting in Asia-Pacific, FAO produced a video on the use of tissue culture in propagating tree planting stock in Thailand.

28. In September 2017, FAO provided contributions to the organization of a session on forest genetic resource at the 125th Anniversary Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), held in Freiburg, Germany. Furthermore, FAO presented an update on monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to the Annual Meeting of the OECD Scheme on Forest Seed and Plant, held in Copenhagen, Denmark in October 2017.

29. As an additional contribution to information-sharing, FAO launched the Second Edition of the Climate-smart Agriculture Sourcebook³⁷ in November 2017. It includes a chapter on the management of forest genetic resources as part of the module on genetic resources for food and agriculture.

30. In June 2018, the Twenty-Fourth Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry was briefed on relevant decisions of the Commission as well as the activities of the Working Group. The Committee

²⁸ FO:APFC/2017/REP.

²⁹ <https://www.bioversityinternational.org/research-portfolio/forests/saforgen/>

³⁰ <http://www.euforgen.org>

³¹ <https://www.fs.fed.us/global/nafc/genetics/aboutus.htm>

³² <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/modules/forest-genetic-resources/basic-knowledge/en/>

³³ <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/modules/forest-reproductive-material/basic-knowledge/en/>

³⁴ <http://www.gentree-h2020.eu/>

³⁵ <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/events/detail-events/en/c/1440/>

³⁶ <http://www.fao.org/africa/events/detail-events/en/c/1035227/>

³⁷ <http://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture-sourcebook/en/>

welcomed the preparation of *The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* by 2023 and appreciated the work done by the Working Group. The Committee also discussed the role of biodiversity in the forest sector and invited member countries to strengthen the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Furthermore, it requested FAO to continue coordinating and supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and regularly report on progress made in its implementation to the Committee.

III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

31. The Commission may wish to:
- i. take note of the First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action;
 - ii. invite countries to continue implementing the Global Plan of Action, and encourage them to address the findings of the First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action, as appropriate;
 - iii. consider the revised draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources, as presented in the document CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.3, with a view to adopting them;
 - iv. consider the updated draft funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, as given in CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.4, with a view to adopting it;
 - v. encourage countries to actively mainstream forest genetic resources into larger and holistic actions on sustainable forest management and forest-based adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as to identify needs for specific and strategic actions on forest genetic resources;
 - vi. request FAO to continue coordinating and supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, in collaboration with regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations; and
 - vii. encourage donors to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and its funding strategy.