

**FAO International Technical Conference
on Plant Genetic Resources**

**REPORT OF THE SUB-REGIONAL
PREPARATORY MEETING FOR
EASTERN AFRICA AND
INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS**

**Nairobi, Kenya
12-14 September 1995**



Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations



Note by FAO

The designations employed and the presentation of the material and maps in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	4
OPENING CEREMONY	4
PROCEDURAL MATTERS	5
INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES, ITS PREPARATORY PROCESS AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS	5
PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY REPORTS AND SUB-REGIONAL SYNTHESIS REPORTS	6
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS, CONCERNS AND PRINCIPLES FOR THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION	7
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION	8
Policy and Institutional Aspects	8
Global Mechanisms	10
Technical Aspects	11
CLOSING REMARKS	12



INTRODUCTION

1. The sub-regional preparatory meeting of the FAO Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources was held in Nairobi, Kenya at UNEP Headquarters, from 12 to 14 September 1995. The meeting was organized by the FAO in association with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Marketing Kenya.

2. Participants from each of following countries attended the meeting: Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda from the Eastern Africa sub-region, and Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles, from the Indian Ocean Islands sub-region. In addition, a number of observers from IPGRI, ICIPE, ICRAF, ICRISAT and IUCN were present.

OPENING CEREMONY

3. The FAO Representative in Kenya, Mr. Harold Norton, chaired the opening session. Dr. Philip Muema, Director of Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Marketing welcomed participants on behalf of the host country. Mr. Norton then delivered the welcome address on behalf of the Director-General of FAO, Mr. Jacques Diouf. On behalf of the Director General of IPGRI, Dr. Frank Attere, the Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa explained the involvement and contribution of IPGRI in the process leading to the 4th International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources.

4. On behalf of Ms. Elisabeth Dowdeswell, Executive Director of UNEP, Dr. Hamdallah Zedan welcomed the participants to UNEP Headquarters. He emphasized UNEP's support for the Fourth International Technical Conference. Mr. Zedan referred to the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity *viz.* conservation, sustainable utilization of biodiversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits. He hoped that the GPA would address these issues.

5. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Marketing, Eng. Peter Wambura delivered the opening address on behalf of the Minister. He welcomed participants to Kenya and declared the meeting open.



PROCEDURAL MATTERS

6. The meeting elected Prof. James Chweya of Kenya as Chairman. Dr. Seyfu Ketema (Ethiopia) and Dr. Rafiq Naseeven (Mauritius) were elected as Vice-Chairmen. Election of officers was made by acclamation.

7. The draft agenda of the meeting was adopted. Two working groups were established for the presentation and discussion of Country Reports and the Sub-regional Synthesis Reports: one for Eastern Africa, and one for the Indian Ocean Islands. In addition, workshops were established on the following three themes for discussion of recommendations for the Global Plan of Action: (a) National Programmes -- creating nationally coordinated efforts for the conservation and utilization of PGRFA; (b) Conservation and utilization of PGRFA -- how to build an integrated approach? (c) International cooperation in PGRFA conservation and utilization -- what role of the sub-regional, regional and global levels?

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES, ITS PREPARATORY PROCESS AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

8. The aims and background of the Fourth International Technical Conference were introduced by Mr. H. David Cooper of the FAO Secretariat. The International Technical Conference was expected to adopt the first Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and a costed Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources. These documents were being prepared through a country-driven process with opportunities for country input at several stages. Firstly, countries had prepared Country Reports. Secondly, sub-regional meetings allowed for the preparation of sub-regional synthesis reports as well as recommendations for the Global Plan of Action. The intergovernmental Commission on Plant Genetic Resources was providing guidance to the process. Finally, governments would consider final drafts of the two documents at the International Technical Conference itself in Leipzig, Germany, June 17 - 23, 1996. IPGRI, as a major partner of FAO in the preparatory process, was providing assistance to countries for the preparation of Country Reports and the compilation of Sub-Regional Synthesis Reports.



9. FAO Conference had requested the preparation of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action in order to provide a scientifically sound basis for the international funding mechanism for the realization of Farmers' Rights. The two documents would be elements of the FAO Global System for the conservation and utilization of PGR. UNCED, through Agenda 21, and the Diplomatic Conference for the adoption of the text of the Convention on Biological Diversity had called for the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action to be developed through the International Technical Conference.

10. The objectives of the Global Plan of Action would be to promote the conservation and sustainable utilization of PGRFA and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use. The Plan was intended to provide the framework for future international collaboration in the field of plant genetic resources. Detailed projects and programmes would be developed during the implementation of the Plan, taking into consideration the particular needs of countries and regions. The Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources would provide assessments of the state of diversity, the state of the art, and the state of capacity for conserving, utilizing and sharing benefits.

PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY REPORTS AND SUB-REGIONAL SYNTHESIS REPORTS

11. In the sub-regional working groups, country representatives presented brief overviews of their Country Reports regarding the state of genetic resources conservation and utilization, and the state of relevant technologies and capacities in their respective countries, as well as major gaps and needs. Rwanda had submitted a Country Report but did not attend the meeting. Full Country Reports will be made available at the International Technical Conference in Leipzig.

12. The draft sub-regional synthesis report for Eastern Africa was presented by Mr. Dan Kiambi to the sub-regional working group for Eastern Africa. The draft sub-regional synthesis report for the Indian Ocean Islands was presented by Mr. Ehsan Dulloo to the sub-regional working group for the Indian Ocean Islands. The two reports were discussed in their respective groups. After appropriate modifications, the two sub-regional synthesis reports were endorsed as useful inputs for the preparation of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources (Annexes 1 and 2).



GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS, CONCERNS AND PRINCIPLES FOR THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

13. The meeting agreed on the following general considerations:
- (a) The ultimate purpose of PGRFA conservation and utilization is to contribute to sustainable agriculture and national development. The Global Plan of Action should therefore give balanced support to conservation and utilization and strengthen the links between them.
 - (b) The Global Plan of Action should promote utilization of PGR in the broad sense. Utilization includes not only crops improved through plant breeding and genetic manipulation, but also the direct use of unaltered species and varieties by farmers.
 - (c) National PGR Programmes are essential institutional requirements for PGRFA utilization and conservation. National PGRFA Programmes should be able to assess national needs for PGRFA in order to contribute to sustainable agriculture and national development. Strategies should be developed to meet the identified needs. (For example, PGRFA needs could be met from material conserved in country, either *in situ* (including on-farm) or *ex situ*, and/or through access to germplasm conserved elsewhere). National Action Plans for PGRFA conservation and utilization should be developed through National PGR Committees or similar bodies, in line with the country's socio-economic development plans and cultural and aesthetic values. National programmes should be coordinated efforts integrating all activities for PGRFA conservation and utilization. They should have a sustainable and adequate level of funding. They should develop linkages between major players and users of PGRFA that is, farmers' organizations, governmental institutions, NGOs, women's groups and the private sector, drawing upon the comparative advantages and diversity of relevant institutions. Where possible, PGRFA concerns should be integrated into existing national planning and coordination mechanisms, rather than creating additional levels of policy making.
 - (d) The interdependence of countries and regions for PGRFA means that international cooperation is essential, and that access to and exchange of PGRFA must be facilitated. There is a willingness to share resources both within the sub-region and globally. However, there must also be a fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of PGRFA in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity. In this context, of particular concern are new barriers to the availability of PGRFA due to the patenting of plants, genes and genetic characteristics. The burden of conservation must also be shared between countries.



- (e) Shortage of funding is a major constraint. International funding is often insufficient and short-term. Many activities for PGRFA conservation and utilization are long-term and require sustainable funding. Therefore, new and additional funding that is provided on a planned and sustainable basis will be required to support the activities of the Global Plan of Action. Some activities might also be funded by reallocation of resources. However, international funding does not remove the need for domestic funding. National commitment to provide sustainable funding for national programmes and projects is essential.
- (f) In addition to international mechanisms for sharing benefits, benefits can and should be realized within the sub-regions by the utilization of indigenous PGR, and other resources found in the region, including the rich diversity of landraces which are adapted to the sub-regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

14. The meeting proposed the following recommendations for the Global Plan of Action:

Policy and Institutional Aspects

- (i) International policy frameworks, trade agreements and regulatory mechanisms, should be reviewed and those that are counter-productive to conservation of plant genetic resources should be considered for adjustment. New policies should be developed where necessary. A strategy for reducing genetic erosion should be developed. Incentives and compensation should be provided, if necessary, for PGRFA conservation particularly at the community level. Better international mechanisms for the protection of agricultural interests of the developing countries should be developed since most of their economies are based on agriculture and negative changes can impact on plant genetic resources.
- (ii) Support from the Global Plan of Action should be provided to build and/or strengthen integrated national programmes for PGRFA conservation and utilization, to complement national commitment for PGRFA conservation and utilization.



- (iii) The Global Plan of Action should promote activities to raise awareness about the value of PGRFA both amongst the public and decision-makers, and through the mass media and the education system. This should be considered an integral activity of National Programmes, and should also be promoted at international levels.
- (iv) The Global Plan of Action should provide support for capacity building, including training, within the context of integrated national programmes. This should be done primarily through strengthening of local institutions to provide training in plant genetic resources and creation of centers of excellence in specific technical areas. PGRFA should be integrated into relevant school and university curricula to emphasize the importance of PGRFA for humanity and for the environment.
- (v) The Global Plan of Action should assist developing countries in implementing international agreements, policies and undertakings in the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources.
- (vi) PGRFA conservation and utilization should be integrated into international and regional economic policies, particularly through inter-governmental regional economic commissions. Eco-regional approaches to conservation of genetic resources should be developed in order to cover the species eco-geographic distribution across political boundaries.
- (vii) Collaboration at the regional and/or sub-regional levels should be strengthened particularly through the use of existing agricultural research networks and intergovernmental fora, and, as the need arises through other collaborative mechanisms. The aims of such collaboration should be to share the burdens of PGR conservation, to promote utilization, and to coordinate research, including the regional and sub-regional programmes of the IARCs and other regional and international institutions, and to avoid duplication of work. Opportunities for collaboration in capacity building at the sub-regional and regional levels should be identified and promoted.
- (viii) The capacity of appropriate international organizations should be strengthened in order to provide technical and scientific advisory services to developing nations concerning the development of effective national programmes, strategies and projects in plant genetic resources, including capacity building and training; and to provide scientific backstopping in regional and international programmes and projects in plant genetic resources.



Global Mechanisms

- (ix) The Global Plan of Action should promote agreements to facilitate access to genetic resources whilst ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits with countries of origin in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity. In this context, the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking should be completed, including: (a) a multilateral agreement on access to PGRFA, with appropriate regulation of the movement of PGR between countries; and (b) the realization of Farmers' Rights. Intellectual Property Rights systems should be adjusted to recognize gene donor rights, Farmers' Rights, and the traditional resource rights of local peoples.
- (x) The Global Plan of Action should promote the elaboration of an international agreement on biosafety and bioethics to enable developing countries to control the importation of genetically modified organisms and germplasm.
- (xi) The International Code of Conduct for germplasm collecting and transfer, as another element of the FAO Global System on Plant Genetic Resources, should be promoted, and mechanisms should be developed to facilitate the transfer of technology for the conservation and utilization of PGRFA between and among member countries.
- (xii) An international funding mechanism should be established to support the Global Plan of Action and contribute to the realization of gene donor rights, Farmers' Rights, and the traditional resource rights of local peoples. The funding mechanism for genetic resources conservation and utilization should include innovative, decentralized and accountable strategies for fund raising, fair means of disbursement of such funds on merit and development of criteria and guidelines to be used for project funding.
- (xiii) Networks of genebanks should be established or developed, in order to share the burden of conservation. A global network of Genebanks should be established building upon the International Network of *ex situ* collections under the auspices of FAO. In this context, legal agreements should be developed where necessary to protect the rights of sovereign nations over national collections located in international, regional or sub-regional genebanks. The Plan should also include a mechanism to facilitate the repatriation and accessibility of the accessions of genetic resources collections from developing countries held in genebanks in the North.



- (xiv) An international system for documentation of plant genetic resources, as well as traditional knowledge associated with PGRFA, should be developed, building upon existing systems, taking into account national, regional and international differences and interests.
- (xv) An integrated early warning system or mechanism should be established to monitor genetic erosion of PGRFA both *in situ* and *ex situ*, combining traditional knowledge with modern scientific approaches.
- (xvi) Mechanisms for rapid reaction and mobilization of resources should be developed to avert adverse consequences on plant genetic resources as a result of drought, war and other catastrophes and emergencies.

Technical Aspects

- (xvii) The Global Plan of Action should provide support to National Programmes to carry out inventories of PGRFA conserved *in situ* and *ex situ*, and for the development of documentation systems. In accordance with priorities to be set at national and sub-regional levels, attention should be given to important genepool centres, and to resources threatened by erosion.
- (xviii) The Global Plan of Action should promote an integrated conservation and utilization strategy, encompassing:
 - *in situ* conservation, including on-farm conservation of landraces;
 - *ex situ* conservation with the rational organization of base, active and working collections, with appropriate collaboration at national, sub-regional and/or regional, and international levels as appropriate;
 - improvement of conservation technologies, including those appropriate for non-orthodox seeds and vegetatively propagated plants.
- (xix) Strategic plans should be developed for identification of gaps in *ex situ* collections and *in situ* conservation sites and the set up and/or strengthening of *ex situ* conservation facilities at both national and regional levels.
- (xx) The Global Plan of Action should address the obstacles to greater utilization of PGRFA with particular emphasis on some strategic actions to overcome such obstacles, *inter alia*:



- evaluation of conserved germplasm, under conditions representative of the proposed area of use;
 - pre-breeding activities;
 - greater emphasis on underutilized species, including multipurpose trees, and especially those outside of current IARC mandates;
 - facilitating, where appropriate, the direct use by farmers of landraces and other material conserved in genebanks;
 - promoting the use of landraces in breeding programmes;
 - research and development of methodologies on decentralized and participatory approaches to plant breeding.
- (xxi) Control measures for exotic species which pose a serious threat to indigenous plant genetic resources should be developed. The problem is particularly acute on small islands.

CLOSING REMARKS

15. In their closing remarks, Dr. Attere, IPGRI Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, and Mr. Norton, FAO Representative, congratulated the participants on the useful results achieved in the meeting. Dr. Attere referred to the new era of work in PGRFA conservation and utilization which would be established with the development of the Global Plan of Action. They praised the close working relationship of FAO and IPGRI which had allowed the Secretariat to function efficiently. They thanked the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Marketing of Kenya for hosting the meeting. The meeting was declared closed by Professor Chweya of Kenya.