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## COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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### **PROGRESS REPORT ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES**

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## PROGRESS REPORT ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

### I. Introduction

1. The Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources was convened by FAO at the request of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture<sup>1</sup> in 1991,<sup>2</sup> and held in Leipzig, Germany, from 17 to 23 June 1996. It was attended by 150 countries. The Conference adopted the *Global Plan of Action*, the *Leipzig Declaration*, and made a number of recommendations for follow-up. It also welcomed the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*.
2. The International Technical Conference responded to the Commission's decision to develop these two key elements of the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: the periodic *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, to assist the Commission in monitoring the international situation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture; and the rolling *Global Plan of Action*, to facilitate the Commission's coordinating functions. These two documents were prepared through the participatory, country-driven process of the International Technical Conference.
3. The *Report of the International Technical Conference* is available as ITCPGR/96/REP; the *Global Plan of Action* and the *Leipzig Declaration*, as adopted by the Conference, and the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, as presented to the Technical Conference, are also available.
4. The implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and other matters concerning the follow-up to the Conference will be considered by the Commission at its Seventh Session, in 1997. However, for the information of the present session of the Commission, this paper provides an interim progress report on follow-up activities, cross-referenced to the relevant paragraphs of the *Report*.

### II. Reporting and follow-up on the outcome of the Leipzig Meeting

5. As requested by the International Technical Conference<sup>3</sup> FAO has reported on the outcome of Leipzig to its Member Countries, as well as to relevant organizations and meetings.
6. The *Report* of the International Technical Conference was distributed to its Member

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<sup>1</sup> While still the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources.

<sup>2</sup> The convening of the Conference was subsequently endorsed by the FAO Conference and by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in 1992.

<sup>3</sup> ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 20 and 28.

Countries through official channels<sup>4</sup>. The outcome of the Conference was also reported to the Hundred and Eleventh Session of the FAO Council (October 1996), which, by Resolution CL 111/1, *The Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, endorsed the *Report*, the *Global Plan of Action*, and the *Leipzig Declaration*. The relevant extract from the Council Report (CL 111/REP), including this Resolution, is available as an information document.

7. The Director-General moreover wrote to the heads of fifty-three major organizations and institutions, informing them of the outcome of the Leipzig Conference, and inviting their member constituencies to promote and take part in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.

8. The *Global Plan of Action* and the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* were made available to the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Buenos Aires (4-15 November 1996). As requested by the International Technical Conference,<sup>5</sup> its Chairman presented the *Leipzig Declaration* and the outcome of the Conference itself to the Conference of the Parties,<sup>6</sup> which adopted a decision on biological diversity which, *inter alia*:

- welcomed the contribution that the *Global Plan of Action*, as adopted by the International Technical Conference, provides to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the field of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- encouraged Parties actively to implement the *Global Plan of Action*, in accordance with their national capacities; and
- endorsed its priorities and policy recommendations.

9. In considering the *Global Plan of Action*, the Conference of the Parties also recognized

“that several issues require further work in the context of the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in particular: financing; the realization of Farmers' Rights, as discussed in the Global Plan of Action; as well as terms of technology transfer to developing countries and access and benefit-sharing arrangements, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Convention. In this regard, calls for effective and speedy completion of the revision of the International Undertaking and strengthening the FAO Global System”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Copies of the *Report*, and other associated documents of the Conference, as appropriate, have also been distributed to all persons and institutions who were involved in the preparatory process.

<sup>5</sup> ITCPR/96/REP, Para. 31.

<sup>6</sup> The outcome of Leipzig was earlier considered by the Second Session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2-6 September 1996) which made appropriate recommendations to the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

<sup>7</sup> The full text of this Decision (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/L.12) is available as an information document.

10. During the preparations for the World Food Summit, the Committee on World Food Security and its Inter-sessional Working Group, governments introduced elements reflecting the outcome of the International Technical Conference into the *Plan of Action on World Food Security*, which the Summit formally adopted on 13 November 1966. Under Objective 3.2, the *Plan of Action on World Food Security* states that “governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society, and with the support of international organizations, will, as appropriate, implement the Leipzig Global Plan of Action”.

### **III. Dissemination of the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*<sup>8</sup>**

11. The Conference requested that the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, as well as the associated background documents, be issued as FAO information documents, which could also be made available through the Internet, and periodically updated. The concise version of the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, as presented to the Conference, as well as the *Leipzig Declaration* and the *Global Plan of Action*, which it adopted, have accordingly been published in a format suitable for wide distribution, and a booklet summarizing these two documents has also been produced.<sup>9</sup>

12. The full version of the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* (which was provided to the International Technical Conference as background documentation) is being finalized for publication, in line with the request of the Conference. The Secretariat has incorporated countries' recommendations and comments, and the text has also been circulated for a peer review to a number of eminent scientists and institutions. The document will be initially available only in the language in which it was prepared (English), and extra-budgetary funds are being sought to allow its publication in other languages.

13. As requested, the Conference documents have been posted on the Internet<sup>10</sup>. This information will also be made available on CD-ROM.

14. Steps are also being taken to integrate data and information from the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, as well as from documents of the International Technical Conference, such as the Country Reports, into the World Information and Early Warning System. This will facilitate the future updating of the *Report*.

15. In line with the recommendations of the *Global Plan of Action*, FAO is also making preparations for a review of the World Information and Early Warning System, and a Technical Consultation involving users from all regions was organized in Radzikow, Poland, in September 1996, to identify user needs more precisely.

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<sup>8</sup> ITCPGR/96/REP. Para. 14.

<sup>9</sup> These are the versions of the documents at the disposal of the Commission in this session.

<sup>10</sup> At URL <http://web.icppgr.fao.org>, from which Conference documents, Country Reports and the *Report* of the Conference itself may be downloaded.

#### IV. The implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*<sup>11</sup>

16. The International Technical Conference agreed that “the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* should take place as an integral part of the Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity”. The Leipzig Conference noted that the *Global Plan of Action* itself called for action at local, national, regional and international levels, involving all parties which were associated with the preparatory process.<sup>12</sup>

17. Council Resolution CL 111/1 accordingly requested “the FAO secretariat to review its capacities to support the progressive implementation, monitoring and updating of the *Global Plan of Action* and to identify possible sources of financing”. FAO is therefore analyzing the priority activities contained in the *Plan* to determine key follow-up actions that need to be taken.<sup>13</sup>

18. A survey and analysis on current levels of expenditure on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture was requested both by the Second Extraordinary Session of the Commission<sup>14</sup> and by the International Technical Conference itself.<sup>15</sup> To carry out this task, the Secretariat will request information from countries and organizations on their plant genetic resources activities and expenditure, in the light of the priority activities of the *Global Plan of Action*. The survey and analysis when completed will be presented to the Commission.

#### V. Costing and financing of the *Global Plan of Action*<sup>16</sup>

19. The International Technical Conference requested that cost estimates in the draft *Global Plan of Action* be refined in light of the changes that had been made by the Conference in many of the priority activities.<sup>17</sup> The Secretariat has carried out this task: the refined cost estimates, and information on the methodology employed, are presented in Document CGRFA-EX3/96/Inf. 1 Annex.

20. The International Technical Conference affirmed that funds should be made available to finance the implementation by developing countries and countries with economies in transition of the *Global Plan of Action*, under the commitments for the new and additional funds made under Agenda 21 and by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The

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11 ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 18 to 28.

12 ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 18.

13 FAO will contribute to the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* through (i) providing support to the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*; (ii) catalyzing international activities in certain programme areas within FAO's mandate; and (iii) assisting governments, as appropriate, to formulate projects within the framework of the *Global Plan of Action*, for a variety of funding sources and, at their request, to implement them.

14 CGRFA-EX2/96/REP, Para. 19.

15 ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 28.

16 ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 18 to 28.

17 ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 17.

Conference also requested that every effort should be made to seek new, additional and innovative sources of financing within the process of the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.<sup>18</sup> FAO has accordingly initiated a study to identify such possible sources of finance, and the results of the study will be presented to the Commission in due course.

21. The International Technical Conference requested that major multilateral and bilateral funding and development institutions be invited to examine ways and means for supporting the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, maintaining close cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity.<sup>19</sup> The Director-General, in communicating the outcome of the Leipzig Conference to relevant financing institutions and organizations (see paragraph 7 above), drew their attention to this request. By Resolution CL 111/1 (see the information document extracted from CL 111/REP), the FAO Council also invited “national, regional and international funding organizations to consider the priorities of the *Global Plan of Action* as policy guidance for their funding programmes”. The Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity “requested the interim financial mechanism [the Global Environment Facility] to give priority to supporting efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity important to agriculture”, in accordance with its decision on agricultural biological diversity, which *inter alia* endorsed the priorities and policies of the *Global Plan of Action*.

#### **VI. Monitoring and reviewing the rolling *Global Plan of Action* and periodically updating the *Report on the State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources*)<sup>20</sup>**

22. The Conference agreed that “overall progress in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and of the related follow-up processes would be monitored and guided by national governments and other Members of FAO, through the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture”. It is proposed that matters related to this function of the Commission, as well as mechanisms for the periodical updating of the *Report on the State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources*, be considered at the Commission’s Seventh Session in 1997.

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18 ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 27.

19 ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 28.

20 ITCPGR/96/REP, Para. 21.