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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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FOLLOW-UP TO OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its Twelfth Regular Session, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) endorsed *The Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second Report)* and agreed on updating the *Global Plan of Action on the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Global Plan of Action)*, for consideration at its next session. In adopting its Strategic Plan 2010-2017¹ for the implementation of the Multi-Year Programme of Work, the Commission also requested follow-up on a number of ongoing activities. The Commission, in particular, made recommendations with regard to²:

- the Facilitating Mechanism of the *Global Plan of Action*;
- the National Information Sharing Mechanisms;
- plant breeding and seeds systems;
- crops for food security including underutilized crops, *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).

2. This document provides a summary of the ongoing work, the recommendations of the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group)³ as well as the decisions of the Fourth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) as they relate to these areas. The guidance of the Commission is requested in these areas, in particular in light of the updated *Global Plan of Action*⁴ and for the implementation of its Multi-Year Programme of Work.

II. FACILITATING MECHANISM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

3. At its Twelfth Regular Session, the Commission welcomed the progress made in the further development of the Facilitating Mechanism and stressed the need to continue to advance it in order to mobilize financial and other support for developing countries, to assist their implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*⁵. It also agreed that the further operation of the Facilitating Mechanism, including awareness-raising, should be undertaken in synergy with activities undertaken by the International Treaty.

4. Since the Commission's last session, activities have progressed mainly in the information servicing through the web-based portal by enriching existing content for widening the range of potential beneficiaries. The number of searchable funding opportunities has been increased and the portal continues to provide news about recent publications, forthcoming events and related activities, also in collaboration with the portal updates of the International Treaty. It can be expected that in light of the updated *Global Plan of Action*, some adjustments to the Facilitating Mechanism may become necessary. The Facilitating Mechanism continues to be funded exclusively through the FAO Regular Programme and no extra-budgetary resources have been made available during the reporting period.

5. The Working Group, at its Fifth Session, emphasized its valuable role in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and stressed the need for cooperation between the

¹ CGRFA-12/09/Report/Appendix G.

² CGRFA-12/09/Report, Paragraph 25.

³ CGRFA-13/11/8.

⁴ CGRFA-13/11/6.

⁵ CGRFA-12/09/Report, Paragraph 26.

Commission and the International Treaty. It also recommended that the Commission call for extra-budgetary resources to advance further its operation.

III. NATIONAL INFORMATION SHARING MECHANISMS

6. The Commission, at its last session, acknowledged the considerable effort undertaken in the establishment of 60 National Information Sharing Mechanisms (NISMs) accessible through the World Information and Early Warning System (WIEWS), and agreed that extra-budgetary resources were needed to establish and strengthen NISMs in the maximum number of developing countries, also in view of future Country Reports and national assessments on plant genetic resources.⁶

7. FAO has continued to update and improve the tools used by countries for applying the new monitoring approach. Since the Commission's last session, the six NISMs that were in the process of being established have been completed, with support from the FAO Regular Programme and extra-budgetary resources from Japan.⁷ The latest version operates in twenty-four languages,⁸ as does the web version. The application of the monitoring approach to all countries as recommended by the Commission, however, will require additional extra-budgetary resources. Support for strengthening the existing mechanisms in selected countries may also be required. Any further development of the current monitoring approach, including the indicators and the reporting format, are associated with the updating of the *Global Plan of Action*. The development of the global information system will also impact on any development in the NISMs.

8. The Working Group welcomed the continued updating and improvement of the NISMs and stressed their importance for supporting informed decision-making and for the preparation of national, regional and global assessments on PGRFA. It recommended that the Commission provide guidance on further advancing the NISMs in the context of the updated *Global Plan of Action*, taking into account the need for close cooperation between the Commission and the International Treaty. It recommended that the Commission recognize the need for sustainable resources to apply it to a maximum number of countries and strengthen established NISMs. It also emphasized the need to further elaborate a vision for the development of the Global Information System in the context of Article 17 of the International Treaty, taking into account existing information systems to avoid duplication of efforts⁹.

IV. STRENGTHENING PLANT BREEDING

9. The Commission, at its last session, emphasized the role of plant breeding in addressing food security, commended the FAO-led Global Partnership Initiative for Plant Breeding Capacity Building (GIPB) for its work, and recognized the importance of these efforts in the context of the implementation of Article 6 of the International Treaty on *sustainable use of plant genetic resources*.¹⁰ It requested FAO to continue its work to strengthen seed systems at national, regional and global levels, and reporting on activities and programmes being implemented on plant breeding and seeds systems.¹¹

10. With Regular Programme and extra-budgetary resources, and in collaboration with various national, regional and international partners, GIPB is developing a 'Plant Breeding Capacity Assessment Tool' to support policy makers, research and development managers and

⁶ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 27.

⁷ GCP/RAS/240/JPN: Capacity Building and Regional Collaboration for Enhancing the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources in Asia.

⁸ www.pgrfa.org

⁹ IT/GB-3/09/Report, *Appendix A.7*, Paragraph 22.

¹⁰ CGRFA-12/09/Report, Paragraph 30.

¹¹ See IT/GB-4/11/19.

funding agencies in the management of crop improvement and seeds programmes. It has also developed a pre-breeding course and undertaken six in-depth country case studies¹² to generate baseline data that inform strategies for strengthening the continuum between plant breeding to the delivery of high quality seeds of improved varieties. The document, *Strengthening Plant Breeding Capacities*,¹³ reviews innovations in plant breeding technologies and elaborates on the ongoing work related to building capacity and the development of tools for raising awareness and strengthening national strategies for PGRFA that link plant breeding to germplasm conservation and seed systems. A global stakeholder consultation is being proposed to generate a suite of relevant best practices to assist member countries in adopting strategies and a road map to institutionalize effective plant breeding programmes that sustainably make use of PGRFA, and developing adequate technologies to produce better crop varieties in response to national needs and to increase food security.

11. GIPB is partnering with the Secretariat of the International Treaty in clarifying the notion of a ‘toolbox for the sustainable use of PGRFA’, as it relates to Article 6 of the International Treaty.¹⁴ The Governing Body, at its Fourth Session, has requested for collaboration with FAO technical units and other stakeholders to further explore the development of a toolbox on sustainable use of PGRFA in order to assist Contracting Parties in the implementation of Article 6 of the Treaty.² So far, the GIPB has been funded by the FAO Regular Programme and through an extra-budgetary project from the Global Crop Diversity Trust. Additional funds will need to be secured in order to advance further the role of GIPB and expand activities to promote the sustainable use of PGRFA.

12. The Working Group acknowledged the work done by GIPB and stressed the need for effective partnerships at all levels, including through public-private collaboration, sustained resources as well as long-term national strategies, capacities and infrastructure for strengthening linkages between conservation, crop improvement, and the dissemination of quality seeds and planting materials. The Working Group recommended that the Commission reaffirm the importance of further work in the area of plant breeding and support the proposed conference of experts. It also recommended that the Commission urge FAO to strengthen synergies among relevant stakeholders in support of the implementation of the updated *Global Plan of Action* and Article 6 of the International Treaty.

V. STRENGTHENING SEED SYSTEMS

13. The Commission, at its last session, reiterated that a gap analysis of the seed sector should be prepared for its next session.¹⁵ The document, *Gap analysis of the seed sector*,¹⁶ was presented to the Working Group and has been updated in the light of inputs provided by the Working Group. The analysis reveals a wide range of differences in the seed systems and related gaps in key aspects of the seed sector which will require particular attention in the implementation of the updated *Global Plan of Action*. These gaps vary with crop species and the characteristics of the prevailing agriculture - subsistence, semi-commercial or commercial. In many developing countries, farmers’ access to quality seeds of a diverse range of adapted varieties is impeded by inappropriate seed policies and/or regulatory frameworks, resulting in poor coordination between the public and private sectors, weak technical capability and infrastructure.

14. FAO continues to provide technical and policy assistance to strengthen seed systems at national, regional and global levels. FAO has conducted an analysis of some successful small

¹² Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Thailand and Uruguay.

¹³ CGRFA-13/11/Inf.12.

¹⁴ IT/GB-4/11/17.

¹⁵ CGRFA-12/09/Report, Paragraph 31.

¹⁶ CGRFA-13/11/Inf.13.

scale seed enterprises in Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire and India¹⁷ with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses that could be leveraged in the provision of support to other national systems. The role of seed enterprises in Africa for local food security crops was analysed with case studies in eight countries¹⁸ conducted in collaboration with Africa Rice and national partners. Based on the experience and analyses, the guide, *Best Practices for decision makers for promoting the smallholder seed enterprises*, has been developed.¹⁹

15. Within the framework of the *Global Plan of Action*, FAO is working with member countries and partners in a variety of areas related to capacity building to support seed systems and to facilitate farmers' access to quality seed of highly performing varieties in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The development of seed policy using a participatory approach is being facilitated (Sierra Leone, Madagascar, Rwanda, Togo, and Cambodia), and harmonization of seed rules and regulation is under way or beginning at sub-regional level in Africa, Central Asia and Central America.²⁰ Assistance is being provided for the development of local seed enterprises and rehabilitation (Afghanistan, Benin and Cameroon) and for rebuilding the public seed sector after civil strife (Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and South Sudan). With extra-budgetary resources, regional projects have started to improve or develop seed systems in Central Asia and Central America, promote community-based seed production in Latin America, and increase the use of quality seeds in integrated production systems in West Africa.²¹ With partners FAO is organizing a series of global and regional consultations to create a greater awareness of seed policy in order to assist member countries in revitalizing their national seed sectors through policy and regulatory reforms that take into account a diversified seed sector, the emerging private sector and the alternatives presented by local seed supply systems.²²

16. During 2009-2010, a number of knowledge tools, best practices and guidelines on seed sector development were published to assist seed system development and strengthen linkages within the overall framework of sustainable use of PGRFA. These cover topics including quality declared standards for planting materials,²³ biosafety capacity building,²⁴ Crop Calendar,²⁵ and a handbook for seed relief and emergencies.²⁶

17. The Working Group recommended that the Commission request FAO to continue to strengthen seed sector development at the national and regional levels and reaffirm the need for further collaboration in plant breeding capacity and seed systems development. As *Strategic Plan for the the implementation of the Multi-Year Programme of Work 2010-2017* proposes consideration of future work on plant breeding, seed systems and crops essential for food security

¹⁷ FAO, 2010. *Promoting the Growth and Development of Smallholder Seed Enterprises for Food Security Crops*. Case Studies from Brazil, Cote d'Ivoire and India. Plant Production and Protection Paper 201.

¹⁸ Cameroon, Nigeria, Mali, Guinea, The Gambia, Morocco, Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique and Madagascar.

¹⁹ FAO, 2010. *Promoting the Growth and Development of Smallholder Seed Enterprises for Food Security Crops: Best Practices and Options for decision making*.

²⁰ Harmonization of seed rules and regulations completed in CEMAC countries in Central Africa; Seed rules and regulations harmonization ongoing for ECO region in Central Asia and expected to get under way for Central America.

²¹ Central Asia: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; Central America: Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama and Nicaragua; West Africa: Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire; Latin America: Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

²² Expert Consultation on Seed Policy Formulation Italy 28- 30 March 2011, and West Africa Seed Policy Consultation Benin 5-6 May 2011,

²³ FAO, 2010. *Quality declared planting material Protocols and standards for vegetatively propagated crops*. Plant Production and Protection Paper 195.

²⁴ FAO, 2009. *Building Biosafety Capacities FAO's experience and outlook*.

²⁵ Crop Calendar – Africa: <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/seed/cropcalendar/welcome.do>

²⁶ FAO, 2011. *Seeds In Emergencies: A technical handbook*. Plant Production and Protection Paper 202.

and sustainable agriculture, the Commission may wish to reiterate the recommendations of its Working Group and guide FAO with regard to future work in these areas.

VI. ON-FARM MANAGEMENT AND *IN SITU* CONSERVATION

18. The Commission, at its last session, urged that greater attention be given to crops that are essential for food security and requested FAO to prepare an option paper that addresses issues of on-farm management of PGRFA, and *in situ* conservation of crop wild relatives (CWR) and wild plants for food, particularly in developing countries.²⁷ It requested the Working Group to review this paper.²⁸

19. The document, *Options to promote food security: on-farm and in situ management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*,²⁹ provides an analysis of the issues, options and associated challenges in on-farm management of plant diversity and *in situ* conservation of CWR, particularly in developing countries.

20. In collaboration with national, regional and international partners and institutions³⁰, FAO is initiating a project to develop an illustrated Atlas of African agro-biodiversity focused on promising and endangered, underutilised fruits and vegetables. The project will draw on available databases and expertise including HORTIVAR³¹, highlight the diversity and indigenous knowledge, serve as a basis for promoting synergies between participating organizations and encourage the development of an action plan for the promotion of African fruits and vegetables species for improved livelihoods, health and incomes of vulnerable groups.

21. The Working Group emphasized the importance of on-farm management of PGRFA and *in situ* conservation and reaffirmed support for the call by the Commission for the establishment of a global network for *in situ* conservation of crop diversity. It recommended that the Commission consider establishing means to further consider the global network for *in situ* conservation and other important aspects of *in situ* conservation and on-farm management, and emphasized the need for coordination between the International Treaty and the Commission and relevant stakeholders at all levels to promote on-farm management and *in situ* conservation of plant diversity.

VII. THE SECOND REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE AND ITS SYNTHETIC ACCOUNT

22. The Commission, at its last session, requested the Secretariat to finalize the *Second Report*, taking into account the proposals submitted by the Members of the Commission. It also requested FAO to prepare a synthetic account of the *Second Report* that contains its main findings and conclusions, and highlights the gaps and needs for the future.³²

23. As requested, the *Second Report* was finalized for publication together with a CD-ROM containing the Synthetic Account, Country Reports and the Thematic Background Studies. A Synthetic Account of the *Second Report* was prepared to convey its key messages in simple non-

²⁷ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 32.

²⁸ CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraphs 32-33.

²⁹ Background Study Paper No. 51.

³⁰ PROTA, Bioersity International, ICRAF, GlobalHort, World Vegetable Center, CIRAD, INRAB, JKUAT, Kenya Museums, and NIHORT

³¹ HORTIVAR: FAO's georeferenced database on the performance of horticulture cultivars and platform for access and exchange of information related to the horticulture sector.

³² CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 18.

technical style.³³ The Synthetic Account has been translated and is available in all FAO official languages. The translation of the *Second Report* into all FAO official languages is currently under way with resources from the Regular Programme and from the Governments of Italy, Russian Federation and Spain.

24. The *Second Report* was launched by the Director-General in Rome on 26 October 2010 through a press conference that was accompanied with live Web cast. Since then the *Second Report* has been widely distributed through FAO distribution channels. The *Second Report*, the Synthetic Account, Country Reports and Thematic Studies are available online.³⁴

VIII. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

25. The Commission may wish, with regard to:

The Facilitating Mechanism

- (i) Provide guidance on the further development and operation of the Facilitating Mechanism in the context of the updated *Global Plan of Action* and taking into account the need for close cooperation between the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty.

National Information Sharing Mechanisms

- (i) Provide guidance on advancing the NISMs, including the monitoring approach, in light of the updated *Global Plan of Action*, taking into account the need for close cooperation between the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty;
- (ii) Call for extra-budgetary resources to facilitate the application of the monitoring approach in the maximum number of countries and strengthen established NISMs;
- (iii) Provide guidance on the elaboration of a vision for the development of the Global Information System, taking into account existing information systems and the need to strengthen collaboration between the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty.

Strengthening plant breeding and seed systems

- (i) Reaffirm the importance of further work in the area of plant breeding, in particular in support of the implementation of the updated *Global Plan of Action* and Article 6 of the International Treaty, and support a global consultation on plant breeding capacities;
- (ii) Call for extra-budgetary resources to maximize country participation in plant breeding capacity building initiatives;
- (iii) Request FAO to continue to strengthen seed sector development at the national and regional levels for implementation of the updated *Global Plan of Action*;
- (iv) Reaffirm the need for improving linkages between plant breeding capacity and seed systems development.

On-farm management and *in situ* conservation

- (i) Consider establishing means to further consider the global network for *in situ* conservation and other important aspects of *in situ* and on-farm conservation of PGRFA;

³² http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1500e/i1500e_brief.pdf

³⁴ <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/core-themes/theme/seeds-pgr/sow/sow2/en/>

- (ii) Request FAO to, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders at all levels, elaborate on the means and opportunities for an *in-situ* global network for its consideration at the Fourteenth Session;
- (iii) Reaffirm the need for collaboration and coordination at national, regional and international levels to promote on-farm management and *in situ* conservation of plant diversity.