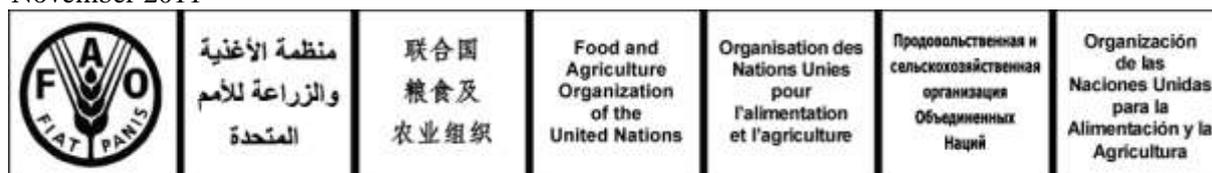


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COUNCIL

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Developments in Fora of Importance for the Mandate of FAO

Executive Summary

In keeping with Action no. 2.31 of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal, the Council is informed of developments in other fora of importance for FAO's mandate. Presentations will be made on the following topics at the 143rd Session of Council:

- Recent Progress on the Implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- Fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention
- The Food Security Information Network
- FAO involvement in the International Year of Cooperatives in 2012
- Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020
- Climate Smart Agriculture Partnership
- World Water Forum.
- Montevideo High-Level Conference on Delivering as One
- Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness

The above topics are presented to the 143rd Session of the Council for information only.

I. Recent Progress on the Implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

1. Progress in the implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has continued at a dynamic pace. The Fourth Session of the Governing Body (Bali, March 2011) was successful in terms of:

- the finalization of the Financial Rules of the Governing Body which had been outstanding since the First Session in 2006;
- adoption of procedures and operational mechanisms to promote compliance and to address issues of non-compliance, the negotiations of which also started in 2006;
- adoption of the Mediation Rules for dispute settlement, in the context of the Third Party Beneficiary Procedures, which guide FAO's functions as the Third Party Beneficiary to the Standard Material Transfer Agreement under the Treaty.

2. The Benefit-sharing Fund of the Treaty, which is the first global benefit-sharing fund for genetic resources, has successfully raised approximately USD 14.3 million over the past 12 months. Several projects have already been supported through the Fund in the first project cycle in 2009 and they all address food security, conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources. The current project cycle of the Benefit-sharing Fund is expected to disburse up to USD 10 million. This cycle focuses on supporting smallholder farmers in developing countries to stay ahead of climate change by adapting their food crops to climatic impact.

II. Fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention

3. The fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade was held in Geneva from 20 to 24 June 2011 and was attended by over 500 participants, representing more than 135 governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

4. The Conference of the Parties (COP) adopted 14 decisions and *inter alia* agreed by consensus to list the pesticides alachlor, aldicarb and endosulfan in Annex III of the Convention. These pesticides will be subject to the Prior Informed Consent procedure, triggering an exchange of information and providing for countries to decide whether they consent to receiving imports of these chemicals. This allows a better management of the risk to human health and the environment when trading hazardous chemicals and pesticides. The COP further adopted a decision regarding enhancing cooperation between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. The decision addresses joint activities, joint managerial functions, joint services, synchronization of budget cycles, joint audits and review arrangements.

5. A work plan and budget for the biennium 2012–2013 was adopted, and the financial rules were brought into alignment with the new financial rules adopted by the COP of the Stockholm Convention. This was done to streamline the budget and budget rules and to avoid duplication of work. The technical assistance work plan for the biennium 2012-2013 assigns high priorities to the resource kit, awareness-raising, training and development of national plans, support for submissions of proposals for severely hazardous pesticide formulations and facilitation of preparation of notifications of final regulatory action.

6. The sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties is tentatively scheduled to be held at FAO Headquarters in Rome from 1-5 July 2013.

III. The Food Security Information Network

7. In early September 2011, a Consultative Conference was held in Nairobi to discuss formulation and implementation plans for the global Food Security Information Network (FSIN). The conference endorsed the constitution of the FSIN, and was attended by international organizations (FAO, WFP, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and UNICEF), resource partners (France, United States, and the European Union), regional organizations (Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency (NPCA), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Central America Integration System (SICA), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)), and representatives from various countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

8. This process has been led by a committee comprised of members from FAO, IFPRI and WFP, with support from the EU and USAID. The FSIN had its genesis in a symposium which was held in Brussels in September 2010 to review gaps and opportunities in food security information systems and related capacity development efforts. After the symposium, the committee envisioned that the FSIN would be created from a base of country and regional institutions, actively sharing information and networking in a global community of practice, with dedicated technical and scientific support from experienced food security information entities and professionals. It was conceived that FSIN would help countries, in information management terms, to be their own “first line of defense” against food crises. Through this, countries would be better able to anticipate and manage food availability when periodic threats occur and assure food access through country-initiated and country-managed safety nets.

9. The proposed specific functions of the FSIN include a role as global coordinator of various activities in order to seek complementarities based on ongoing work and to create synergies to address identified gaps, while creating a platform for exchange of expertise and information products on key indicators of food security. Furthermore the FSIN will facilitate harmonization of food security definitions, methodologies and standards, while supporting South-South and North-South Cooperation, through the creation of a community of practice. Finally, an essential role of the FSIN will be to advocate for increased investment in food security information systems and to demonstrate through country examples how food security information systems can be better linked to policy action.

IV. FAO involvement in the International Year of Cooperatives in 2012

10. At the request of Members, and in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 65/184, the UN has declared 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC). The official launch took place at UN Headquarters in New York on 31 October 2011. The aim of the IYC is to increase public awareness about cooperatives, how they benefit their members, and contribute to socio-economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Year will also highlight the strengths of the cooperative business model as an alternative means of doing business and furthering socio-economic development. The cooperative sector worldwide has about 800 million members in over 100 countries and is estimated to account globally for more than 100 million jobs. Agricultural cooperatives account for 80 to 99 percent of milk production in Norway, New Zealand and the United States; 71 percent of fishery production in the Republic of Korea; and 40 percent of agriculture in Brazil.

11. In this context, the Rome-based agencies have joined forces and will work closely throughout the Year to ensure that the significant contribution of agricultural cooperatives in development is reflected, in particular their role in nurturing collective action and inclusion and in being a sustainable business model. Agricultural cooperatives generate employment, contribute to poverty alleviation and ultimately improve food security. FAO, IFAD, and WFP organized a joint side-event at the official launch of the IYC. This event provided an opportunity to share and exchange experiences on good practices in terms of innovative rural institutions. In particular, the event featured the presentation of the FAO-IFAD publication entitled “Good practices in building innovative rural institutions to increase food security”. The interagency collaboration will continue throughout the Year in various

forms, such as the production of joint policy and communication materials, as well as participation in relevant international events.

V. Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

12. The Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May 2011. The Conference was convened to review the achievements and areas for improvements of the previous Decade (2001-2010) “Brussels” Programme of Action and to develop and adopt a new Programme of Action for the Decade 2011-2020. The overarching goal of the Programme of Action for 2011-2020 is to overcome the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the least developed country category.

13. Guided by the overarching goal, national policies of least developed countries and international support measures during the decade will focus on the following specific objectives with the aim of enabling half the number of least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020:

- Achieve sustained, equitable and inclusive economic growth in least developed countries, to reach a minimum level of 7 per cent per annum;
- Build human capacities by fostering sustained, equitable and inclusive human and social development, gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- Reduce the vulnerability of least developed countries to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters, as well as climate change, and enhance their ability to meet these and other challenges through strengthening their resilience;
- Ensure enhanced financial resources and their effective use for least developed countries’ development, including through domestic resource mobilization, ODA, external debt relief, foreign direct investment and remittances;
- Enhance good governance at all levels, by strengthening democratic processes, institutions and the rule of law; increasing efficiency, coherence, transparency and participation; protecting and promoting human rights; and reducing corruption.

14. The Programme of Action represents the enhanced commitments of the least developed countries, which have the ownership of and primary responsibility for their own development, and of their development partners for a renewed and strengthened global partnership. This partnership includes the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, other multilateral institutions and regional development banks, within their respective mandates.

15. As part of the preparatory process for the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the FAO and the UN Office of High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States together with IFAD and WFP, convened a pre-conference event on “Enhancing Food Security through Agricultural Development and Access to Food and Nutrition”, in December 2010 at UN Headquarters in New York. In addition, during the Conference in Istanbul in May 2011, FAO organized a special event on “Responsible Agricultural Investments in Least Developed Countries”, which counted with the participation of the Director-General.

VI. Climate Smart Agriculture Partnership

16. FAO has developed an international partnership with IFAD, WFP, the World Bank and UNEP which has the objective of supporting the development and implementation of technologies, policy and financial mechanisms related to Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA). Initial work includes supporting the development of an investment platform for Africa, the establishment of a Web portal and the creation of a sourcebook on CSA. The partnership involves of a broad stakeholder group. CSA has the objective of sustainably increasing agricultural production, building resilience and reducing and

removing green house gasses, and enhancing achievements of national food security and development goals.

VII. World Water Forum

17. The World Water Forum is the most relevant event at international level dealing with water-related matters. It takes place every three years and different themes are identified at each session. A priority theme at the 6th World Water Forum, to be held in Marseille from 12 to 17 March 2012, is "Water and Food Security". FAO has been invited by the World Water Council, the convener of the Forum, to coordinate this theme addressing the different dimensions and solutions of the subject, including productivity of agricultural systems under both rainfed and irrigated conditions, the resilience of farming systems vis-à-vis the impact of climate change, the reduction of wastes along the value chain, up to the sustainability of diets. The solutions include technical, institutional and political responses. The overall FAO contribution to the theme is at corporate level, through the FAO-Water Platform, bringing into the debate the fundamental work of the Committee on World Food Security, highlighting FAO's relevant normative and field-programme works, and raising the profile of agriculture when discussing water management issues.

VIII. Montevideo High-Level Conference on Delivering as One

18. At its 64th Session, the United Nations General Assembly requested an Independent Evaluation of the Delivering as One pilot initiative. Pending the results of the Independent Evaluation, the pilots have prepared country-led evaluations. Discussions on these have taken place at two High-Level Intergovernmental Meetings on Delivering as One (Kigali, 2009, and Hanoi, 2010), and were further developed at the High-Level Meeting which took place in Montevideo from 8 to 10 November 2011. FAO was actively involved in the preparations for the meeting in Montevideo, including through dedicated UN inter-agency policy-setting mechanisms such as those coordinated by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). An Organizational Committee was set up to prepare the agenda of the Delivering as One Intergovernmental Conference and address other organizational related matters for the Montevideo conference. A member from each UN Agency was appointed to participate in the meetings of this Committee, with the FAO Liaison Office in New York representing the Organization. Furthermore, FAO has provided contributions through agency-specific lessons learned derived from participation in a survey which was sent to all pilot and self-starter countries.

IX. Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness

19. The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, (Busan, Korea, 30 November to 1 December 2011) concludes the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) led process on aid effectiveness. This process was launched with the First High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Rome in 2003, followed by the adoption of the 2005 Paris Declaration and further developed in the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action. An FAO team has been established to monitor and contribute to the activities of the (UNDG) Aid Effectiveness Task Team. In this context, FAO is ensuring that its key messages delivered in Busan emphasise the need to provide assistance targeted to productive sectors - compared with social sectors - in order to reflect the shift from aid to development effectiveness; as well as the need to strengthen the capacities of countries in planning, programming and implementing their development agenda.