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FACILITATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION* *FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE*

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**FACILITATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION
FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC
RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The Fourth FAO International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources (Leipzig, Germany, 1996) with the participation of 150 countries, adopted the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. The process was carried out with the involvement of governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, academic researchers, and farmers' groups. Countries present at the Leipzig Conference committed themselves to taking the necessary steps to implement the *Plan* in accordance with their national capacities.¹
2. The Conference agreed that the *Plan* "provides a coherent framework for activities in the field of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, in sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources, as well as in institution- and capacity-building".² It further added that the *Plan* "will contribute to creating synergies among on-going activities, as well as more efficient use of available resources". As such, the *Plan* can be regarded as the main framework for activities at national, regional and international levels, and provides a strategy to guide regional and international cooperation on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, in the coming years.³ The Conference also 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 the national governments and other members of FAO, through the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture".⁴
3. The Leipzig Conference emphasized that "The follow-up processes call for action at local, national and international levels and should involve all parties which were associated with the preparation of the International Technical Conference: the national governments, local and regional authorities, regional and international organizations, both inter-governmental and non-governmental, the scientific community, the private sector, local communities and farmers and other agricultural producers and their associations".⁵
4. The *Plan* was subsequently endorsed, welcomed or supported by the FAO Council and Conference,⁶ the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),⁷ and the World Food Summit.⁸ Also the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), as well as many non-governmental organizations, including private sector organizations, have supported the *Plan*.

¹ Leipzig Declaration, 23 June 1996.

² Leipzig Declaration, 23 June 1996.

³ Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources, para. 8.

⁴ ITCGR/96/REP para 21.

⁵ ITCGR/REP para 19.

⁶ Council Resolution 1/111, October 1996; Conference Resolution 1/97, November 1997.

⁷ COP Decision III/11, November 1996.

⁸ Objective 3.2 of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, Rome, November 1996.

5. Since 1996, many organizations have adopted the *Plan*, as a basis for their planning and priority setting, and aligned their work with its priorities and activities. CGIAR centres, and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) in particular, have developed their strategies and medium-term plans in the light of the *Plan*. Several regional and sub-regional plant genetic resources networks, and crop-related networks, are using the *Plan* as the main framework for their activities. The *Plan* has also facilitated integrated consideration of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, both at the level of biological diversity as a whole and within the broader agricultural sector.
6. At its Seventh Regular Session, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture “requested that FAO play a proactive and creative role in facilitating and monitoring implementation of the Global Plan of Action, providing assistance and guidance to countries upon request, including, where appropriate, help in identifying possible new, additional and innovative sources of funding. The Commission considered it important that FAO give high priority to facilitating and promoting implementation of the Plan, and ensure adequate resources for these tasks”.⁹
7. At its Eighth Regular Session, the Commission “stressed the importance of facilitating and monitoring implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and recognized the central role of FAO in this regard”. The Commission agreed that FAO’s work should be developed in cooperation with IPGRI, other CGIAR centres, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB), other international organizations, NGOs, the private sector and funding agencies.
8. In responding to the Commission’s request, this document, which has been developed following consultations with both IPGRI and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), reiterates the call for coordinated action from stakeholders, introduces FAO’s new programmatic approach to facilitate the implementation of the *Plan*, discusses different options to facilitate the *Plan* implementation, suggests future steps and seeks the guidance from the Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture on these issues.

2. THE CALL FOR CONCERTED ACTION FOR FACILITATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

9. *The call for action from countries.* The Commission at its Eighth Regular Session discussed an overview report on the implementation of the *Plan* since its adoption, and noted that “while there had been significant progress, much remains to be done at local, national and international level”.¹⁰ Document CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/2 reviews progress in the implementation of the *Plan* since 1998. It stresses that, while a significant number of activities are being undertaken to implement many priority areas of the *Plan*, additional work is required at all levels to further implement all priority areas, with emphasis on those grouped under *In Situ* Conservation and Development, and Institutions and Capacity-building. The progress report further states that despite substantial efforts by international organizations (including FAO, CGIAR centres, UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank), national funding agencies, NGOs and the private sector in supporting implementation of the *Plan*, more than 70 per cent of the activities reported by countries in the 1998-2000 biennium were implemented using solely national resources.
10. *The call for action from other stakeholders.* The GFAR represents a broad constituency, including national agricultural systems, regional and sub-regional organizations, universities, advanced research institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, farmers’ organizations, multilateral and donor agencies, and international agricultural research centres. In

⁹ CGRFA/7/97/Rep, para 19.

¹⁰ CGRFA-8/99/Rep, para 15.

May 2000, participants at the GFAR Conference held in Dresden, Germany, unanimously endorsed the *Plan* as the basic and comprehensive framework for undertaking those technical activities essential for the effective conservation, development and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Participants were pleased to note that many countries and organizations were already implementing parts of the *Plan*. However, they expressed concern that coordinated implementation and associated financing of the *Plan* had not been realized, and urged effective implementation of the *Plan*, through the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, together with agreed and adequate financial provisions.¹¹

11. The wish of many stakeholders that the *Plan* provide for coherent action in the fields of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources, and institution and capacity-building has not been fully realized. Among the reasons for this is the absence, as yet, of concrete global arrangements to facilitate and mobilize resources for the implementation of the *Plan*. Another reason is that implementation of the *Plan* is a component in the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources. At its Eighth Regular Session, the Commission noted that “possible institutional mechanisms and policy issues, were being considered in the context of the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking”.¹² Article 14 of the Chairman’s simplified Text of the International Undertaking states, that “Recognizing that the rolling *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* is important to this Undertaking, Contracting Parties should promote its effective implementation, including through national actions and, as appropriate, international cooperation to provide a coherent framework, *inter alia*, for capacity-building, technology transfer and exchange of information, taking into account the provisions of Article 13”.¹³ The negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking are intended to be completed this year. There is now an important opportunity to take action to support the effective implementation of the *Plan*.

3. FAO’S NEW PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH

12. The Commission, at its Eighth Regular Session, underlined “the need for FAO to allocate adequate resources from its Regular Budget to support the tasks of monitoring and facilitating implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*”. FAO has consequently taken a number of strategic and programmatic steps, which include greater commitment at all levels to the implementation of the *Plan* and better visibility of the *Plan* in the Organization’s Programme of Work and Budget. The FAO Conference has approved a Strategic Framework to guide the work of the Organization until the year 2015.¹⁴ The Strategic Framework defines a set of strategies that are based on the principles of interdisciplinarity and partnership, and provides an authoritative framework for future programmes to be developed through successive Medium Term Plans (MTPs) and Programmes of Work and Budget. In the first MTP, a new continuing programme activity has been developed for the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. US\$8 700 000 from the FAO regular budget (including staff human resources) has been allocated to this continuing programme activity, for the period 2002-2007. This programme activity is entirely devoted to the *Support to the FAO Global System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, through, *inter alia*:

- the development of a facilitating mechanism and a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, and its revision and updating;

¹¹ Dresden Declaration on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture endorsed at the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) Meeting in Dresden, Germany, May 2000.

¹² CGRFA-8/99/Rep, para. 17.

¹³ CGRFA/Ex-6/01/2.

¹⁴ FAO, 1999. The Strategic Framework for FAO: 2000-2015.

- updating of the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*; and
- the further development of the FAO World Information and Early Warning System (WIEWS).

13. The MTP 2002-2007 was approved by the FAO Council in November 2000, and will be presented to the FAO Conference in November 2001, for endorsement. It provides a flexible framework for a mechanism to facilitate the implementation of the *Plan* under the guidance of the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Several options for the establishment of such a facilitating mechanism are discussed in the following section. Other elements of the MTP are covered in documents: (i) CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/3 - Monitoring the Implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*; (ii) CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/4 - Updating the Report on the *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*; (iii) CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/6 - Progress Report on the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

14. This programmatic approach is also in line with the Council's directives to 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".¹⁵

15. While the greater part of FAO's work on plant genetic resources is carried out by the Agricultural Department, primarily by the Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service of the Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP), it is by no means the only unit involved. Important direct and indirect contributions also come from the Legal Office, the Economic and Social Department and the Sustainable Development Department. Relevant units in the Technical Cooperation Department assist with donor relations and the mobilization of funds, including for emergency and rehabilitation situations, and with feasibility studies and project formulation and implementation.

4. OPTIONS FOR ACTION

16. The newly adopted FAO Strategic Framework through its first Medium Term Plan provides for a facilitating mechanism for the implementation of the *Plan*.¹⁶

17. The establishment of a facilitating mechanism is premised on: (i) the availability of reliable baseline information on activities related to plant genetic resources, at country level, to make possible the development of targeted action, and (ii) the availability of adequate resources. The information base could be ensured by a comprehensive monitoring mechanism, such as that proposed in document CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/3. With the expected conclusion of the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking, greater donor support may be forthcoming. The programme of work on agricultural biological diversity recently adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the draft operational programme on agricultural biodiversity of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), are developments that may also help mobilize additional financial support for the implementation of concrete activities under the *Plan*.¹⁷

18. Taking into account these two premises, four approaches to facilitating the implementation of the *Plan* are introduced in this section. They fall into two categories:

¹⁵ Resolution 1/111 (October 1996).

¹⁶ See para. 12 of this document.

¹⁷ See para. 48 and 49 of document CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/2, *Progress Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

the first category covers what FAO can do within its normative and field operational activities, and includes two distinct but complementary approaches:

- the Regular Programme approach; and
- the project model approach.

The second category covers opportunities for providing suitable fora and/or establishing mechanisms involving other *Plan* stakeholders. Two possible approaches are highlighted:

- the consultative Forum approach; and
- the *Plan* Facility approach.

19. These four approaches are reviewed in this section. They are not intended to be mutually exclusive, but rather represent a progression of effort and engagement. Section 5, then, elaborates further the *Plan* Facility approach. The guidance of the Working Group is sought regarding the most effective approach to developing such a facilitating mechanism.

The Regular Programme Approach

20. In this approach, FAO assumes a proactive and programmatic stance to facilitate the *Plan* implementation, within the allowance of its regular programme, additional support from extrabudgetary resources, for operational activities. While this is a continuation of FAO's traditional role, it is strengthened by the new principles guiding the new FAO's Strategic Framework: internal interdisciplinarity and external partnerships. Coordination among the contributing units within FAO, and enhanced partnership with stakeholders, is foreseen for the implementation of the continuing programme activity, *Support to the FAO Global System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, under the framework of the first MTP for the years 2002-2007.

21. This approach builds on accumulated experience and established procedures, and would provide continuity and stable funding, particularly for normative activities. It can provide logistical and technical support in areas where FAO has a recognized comparative advantage, such as providing assistance in disaster situations and in restoring agricultural systems. However, it relies largely on regular programme resources, which are limited, and have been subject for many years to zero growth. Although these resources are augmented by donor-funded field activities, the limited human and financial capacity available severely restricts the wide operationality necessary for global impact.

The Project Model Approach

22. The classical project model would be used as a vehicle for a multi-donor programme to facilitate implementation of the *Plan*, in a manner responsive to country and stakeholder needs. Such a programme would include the preparation, in consultation with donor and recipient governments, of projects targeted to identified needs, including pilot projects for strengthening national programmes, and community conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Opportunities for *Plan* implementation in partnership with other organizations would be sought. It will be recalled that this modality was employed rather successfully for the preparation of the Leipzig Conference, and the development of the *Plan* itself.

23. The advantages of this approach are several. It builds on FAO's traditional in-house strengths in project formulation and backstopping, and on long experience with donor relations. Programmes of this nature enjoy the flexibility of field projects status in recruitment and overall operation, and benefit from the complementarity between the regular and field programmes in the

areas of professional expertise and the provision of information. This model may be conducive to tackling specific aspects of the *Plan*, but may be less so in sustaining its overall implementation.

24. In 1999-2000, AGP prepared such a multi-donor programme to facilitate implementation of the *Plan*, including pilot projects for strengthening national programmes, and community conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture management; a review of opportunities for implementation through other organizations; and strengthening of global and regional networks, as platforms for developing activities. In its first phase, a series of regional workshops were held, in collaboration with IPGRI and other CGIAR centres, and case studies on national programme development and community management of plant genetic resources were undertaken. However, the project did not progress beyond its first phase, due to lack of adequate donor support. The new scenario as outlined in para. 17 could now render this approach more attractive.

The Consultative Forum Approach

25. FAO, in consultation with other major interested parties, could establish a consultative forum, where stakeholders meet regularly to consider matters related to the promotion and facilitation of the implementation of the *Plan*. The Forum could be closely associated with, and report to the Working Group. Among the main tasks of the Forum would be to coordinate and catalyze activities undertaken by the various stakeholders. On the basis on the information provided by the monitoring mechanism¹⁸, the Forum would identify gaps as well as avoid duplication and overlapping. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research, GFAR, whose Secretariat is hosted by FAO, is an example of this modality.

26. Through this coordinating and catalyzing role, the Forum would make possible the most effective use of available resources, including through joint activities. It is consistent with FAO's traditional role of providing specialized fora and in acting as honest broker. The main disadvantage is that it could, in time, turn into a 'talk shop' without tangible outcome. This approach would, however, be viable if it was to act as the first step towards the establishment of more concrete global arrangements of the kind discussed below.

The Plan Facility Approach

27. This approach would require the major stakeholders and countries concerned to join in a concerted dedicated effort to renew interest in, and provide sustained support for, the implementation of the *Plan*. It would establish, within FAO, a multi-stakeholder facilitating mechanism enjoying a reasonable degree of autonomy. The *Plan* Facility would assume functions of the Consultative Forum and of the project model option described above. This Facility would establish and maintain an agreed portfolio of implementing projects for donors support, and will also have clearly defined executive responsibilities. It would also mobilize wide support and promote practical cooperation among stakeholders, under the guidance of the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Facility in FAO, provides an example of a similar approach.

28. This approach focuses FAO's essential role in the facilitation of the *Plan* on bringing stakeholders and contributors together on an equal footing, which would greatly enhance the sense of ownership and the complementarity between the various actors in the field. It would, however, represent a major undertaking, requiring commitment and skills on the part of FAO and other partners in making the mechanism operationally feasible.

¹⁸ See para 17 of this document.

29. The results and the effectiveness of the mechanism should be periodically reviewed and a “sunset clause” should allow the mechanism to be wound up if it is no longer effectively contributing to the facilitation of the implementation of the *Plan*. The following section discusses underlying principles and rationale, and some preliminary ideas on how to go about establishing such mechanism.

5. THE PROPOSED PLAN FACILITY

30. The Facility may provide an articulated and formal mechanism to facilitate the implementation of the *Plan*. It should function within the broader framework of the FAO Global System for the Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and within the provisions of the revised International Undertaking. It is suggested that such framework be based on four considerations: that it be open and consultative; that it be implemented coherently and in an agreed context; that it translate the *Plan* into concrete actions; and finally it should be geared towards countries’ expressed needs.

Functions of the Facility

31. The functions of the Facility could include: (i) strengthening the involvement and the commitment of all stakeholders in national and international programmes towards implementation of the *Plan*; (ii) interfacing with all partners, to promote implementation through various organizations, and hence to provide for coordination and cooperation amongst them; and (iii) identifying opportunities for activities, and to seek to match these with potential funding sources.

32. Specific activities would include, *inter alia*:

- preparing tailored project proposals, on the basis of the gaps, needs and emergencies identified through the monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the *Plan* and countries’ requests;
- identifying of potential donors, and mobilizing resources;
- convening meetings of stakeholders and donors, as appropriate;
- developing of decision tools, such as manuals and guidelines in line with Commission policy, for national programmes and planning;
- interacting with regional networks and mechanisms; and
- supporting project implementation, through technical assistance.

33. The Facility would:

- be seen as a practical way to mobilize wide support and to promote practical cooperation;
- have clearly enunciated goals, centered on the basic task of facilitating the implementation of the *Plan* in coordination with the monitoring mechanism; and
- have a technical nature, and a certain degree of autonomy and flexibility, in order to be able to deal with a wide range of stakeholders.

34. In developing its programme of work, the *Plan* Facility would consider activities at all levels, in the light of the overall policy set by the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (and/or by the Governing Body of the revised International Undertaking), the opportunities that arise, and availability of resources.

Governance of the Facility

35. The details of the Governance, and the relationship of the Facility with the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (and/or with the

Governing Body of the revised International Undertaking) would be determined by these bodies. However, it may be foreseen that:

- overall policy direction would be provided by the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (and/or the Governing Body of the revised International Undertaking);
- the relationship between the Facility and any operational structure(s) in the context of the revised International Undertaking will need to be outlined;
- operational guidance and advice would be provided by a stakeholders group (see para. 36 and 37), including the co-sponsors and donors, as well as a geographically balanced group of technical experts from developed and developing countries, acting in their personal capacity;
- administration and management support, including financial management, would be provided by FAO, where the Facility would be located; and that
- financial accountability would be to the Facility's co-sponsors and donors, whose role would be to see that the mission and goals of the Facility are respected.

36. The stakeholders of the *Plan* include: farmers and local communities, plant breeders and other users of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, national governments, relevant civil society and private sector organizations, national agricultural research centres (NARS), plant genetic resources programmes, international organizations and other institutions. The co-sponsors would include relevant UN Organizations (e.g., FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD, WB, UNDP, UNEP, GEF), and non-UN organizations (IPGRI and other CGIAR centres, GFAR and others).

37. Relevant individual stakeholders, as partners, could accept a leading role either in financing or implementing specific selected "priority activity areas" of the *Plan*, in line with their mandate and capabilities. Accordingly, they would be invited to report periodically on their plans for the next period and, on due time, on the progress achieved in the implementation of their plans.

Future Steps Towards the Facility

38. If the Working Group considers that the Facility approach should be pursued, the relevant section in the current document, modified in the light of the guidance of the Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, could be used as the basis for consultations with stakeholders and interested parties and donors. In this context, FAO's long experience and its intergovernmental nature, complemented by IPGRI's technical and scientific expertise will be instrumental in getting all stakeholders and interested parties together¹⁹. The outcome of these consultations, including a more detailed analysis of the operational, managerial and financial implications of the establishment of the Facility will be incorporated in a document that will be presented to the Commission at its Ninth Regular Session for its consideration.

39. Following the recommendation of the Working Group and the Commission at its Ninth Regular Session for the Facility approach, it is proposed, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary resources, to:

- make further consultations with relevant stakeholders as appropriate, on the operationalization and funding of the Facility; and
- convene a constitutive meeting to make the Facility operational.

¹⁹ If a Facility is established in FAO, IPGRI has expressed its interest in the possibility of seconding a staff member to it.

6. GUIDANCE REQUESTED FROM THE WORKING GROUP

40. The current document explores various approaches to facilitating the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. The Working Group may wish to make recommendations to the its Ninth Regular Session of the Commission, on the further development by FAO of some or all proposals in this paper and consider the future steps as outlined in paras. 39 and 40. In particular, the Working Group may also wish to recommend that FAO, in cooperation with IPGRI and NARS, initiate discussions with other organizations and donors, in relation to the Facility approach, and report on the outcome of these discussions to the Commission at its Ninth Regular Session.