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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Second Session

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FACILITATING MECHANISM FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION*

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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*. Preparation of the *Plan* was carried out under the auspices of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Countries present at the Leipzig Conference committed themselves to implement the *Plan* in accordance with their national capacities.

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 institution- and capacity-building.”¹ It 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.² 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.”³ The *Global Plan of Action* is a rolling plan; information gained by monitoring its implementation and reporting on the state of the world’s plant genetic resources provides the basis for updating it.

3. The Leipzig Conference emphasized that “The follow-up processes calls 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 nongovernmental, the scientific community, the private sector, local communities and farmers and other agricultural producers and their associations.”⁴

The need for renewed concerted action

4. The Commission at its Eighth Regular Session, in 1999, discussed a 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 levels.”⁵ The Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources at its first Session, in 2001, reviewed progress on the implementation of the *Plan*. The report stressed that while a significant number of activities had been undertaken to implement many priority areas of the *Plan*, additional work is required at all levels. It further stated that more than 70 per cent of the activities reported by countries in the 1998-2000 biennium were implemented using national resources; these were complemented and supported by international organizations (including FAO, CGIAR centres, UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank), national funding agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector. A

¹ Leipzig Declaration, 23 June 1996.

² The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources, para. 8.

³ CPGR/96/REP, para. 21.

⁴ CPGR/96/REP, para. 19.

⁵ CGRFA-8/99/REP, para. 15.

revised progress report on implementation was presented to the Commission's Ninth Regular Session taking into account the deliberations of the Working Group⁶.

5. In May 2000, participants at the Global Forum on Agricultural Research Conference (GFAR)⁷ held in Dresden, Germany, unanimously endorsed the *Global Plan of Action* as the basic and comprehensive framework for undertaking technical activities essential for the effective conservation, development and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. 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.⁸

6. A programme of work on agricultural biodiversity was adopted by Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at their Fifth Conference in 2000⁹. It notes the importance of building on existing international plans of action, and in this regard specifically recognizes the *Global Plan of Action*.

7. Since the time of the preparation of the *Global Plan of Action*, and the first *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, considerable experience has been gained in many areas critical for the implementation of the *Plan*. The combined effort has resulted in knowledge and experience that could provide the basis for major advances in the management of plant genetic resources. However, the wish of many stakeholders that the *Plan* provide for coherent action has not been fully realized.

8. In response to a request from the Commission, the Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources discussed options to facilitate further implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, at their first Session in 2001. They considered a document¹⁰ that had been developed following consultations with IPGRI and the GFAR. The Working Group requested that the Secretariat further elaborate options for consideration by the Commission at its Ninth Regular Session.

9. With the adoption of the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* by FAO Conference (Rome, November 2001), the *Global Plan of Action* assumed still greater significance. The role of the *Global Plan of Action* was acknowledged in Article 14 of the International Treaty which recognized that "the rolling *Global Plan of Action* for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is important to the Treaty, [and] 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 [benefit sharing] provisions of Article 13".

10. At its Ninth Regular Session (2002), the Commission considered a document relative to the Facilitating Mechanism¹¹. It included a list of proposed activities for implementing the

⁶ CGRFA-9/02/6, Progress Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

⁷ The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) represents a broad constituency, including national agricultural systems, regional and sub-regional organizations, universities, advanced research institutions, civil society organizations, private sector entities, farmers' organizations, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, and international agricultural research centres.

⁸ *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.

⁹ *Programme of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity*, Decision V/5, Annex 5, of the Fifth Conference of the Parties of the CBD, May 2000.

¹⁰ CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/5, Facilitating the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

¹¹ CGRFA-9/02/9, *A Facilitating Mechanism for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action*.

Global Plan of Action, and took into account the context of the funding strategy of the International Treaty, for which preparatory action will be required in the interim period before the treaty enters into force.

11. The Commission stressed that “efforts should ... focus on facilitating the provision of technical and financial resources to developing countries — especially least developed countries, and to countries with economies in transition — to address national priorities for implementing the *Plan*. High priority should also be given to enhancing or creating partnerships for implementation of the *Plan*, promoting linkages among plant genetic resources management, plant breeding and seed sector, and networking, and facilitating communication with international organizations and donors”. The Commission considered that “renewed efforts to promote implementation of the *Plan*, through the development of the facilitating mechanism, should build upon the momentum created by the adoption of the International Treaty. The facilitating mechanism should give high priority to assisting in the development of the funding strategy to be adopted by the Governing Body of the International Treaty ... However, the Commission noted that there should be no ambiguity in the roles of the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty, or duplication of activities under the facilitating mechanism and the funding strategy of the International Treaty.” The Commission “recommended that the future development of the Facilitating Mechanism be guided by the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture”. It also “welcomed the proposed partnership with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).”¹²

12. The present document was prepared by FAO and IPGRI to report on follow-up activities undertaken since the Commission’s Ninth Regular Session to further develop the establishment of the Facilitating Mechanism. The Working Group is invited to provide further advice on its establishment and operation.

FAO’s commitment to facilitating implementation of the Global Plan of Action

13. 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 consequently took 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.

14. The FAO Conference has approved a Strategic Framework to guide the work of the Organization until the year 2015.¹³ The Strategic Framework defines a set of strategies that are based on the principles of inter-disciplinarity and partnership, and provides an authoritative framework for future programmes to be developed through successive Medium Term Plans and Programmes of Work and Budget. FAO’s Medium Term Plan 2002-7 provided for the development of a mechanism to facilitate implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.¹⁴ This is further elaborated in the revised Medium Term Plan 2004-9¹⁵. At its Ninth Session, the Commission “noted that FAO’s Medium Term Plan provided for the development of a mechanism to facilitate the implementation of the *Plan* by all stakeholders.”

¹² CGRFA/9/02/REP. para. 26-29

¹³ FAO, 1999. *The Strategic Framework for FAO: 2000-2015*

¹⁴ Programme Entity 212P4: Support to the FAO Global system on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Major Output

¹⁵ Programme Entity 212P4: *Technical support to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, Major Output (b): *Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation, by all stakeholders, of the Global Plan of Action*. Programme entity 212P4 was revised in the light of the adoption of the Treaty.

15. Possible measures that FAO could undertake to further mobilize institutional support for the activities of the Facilitating Mechanism could include increased work at the country and sub-regional levels, when requested by countries and sub-regions through the technical cooperation department, and bringing the activities of the Facilitating Mechanism to the attention of FAO governing bodies. However, while FAO's commitment of resources to implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* is significant, Regular Programme resources alone do not suffice to fully support implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. The need for funding is clearly acknowledged in Article 18 of the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. Preliminary cost estimates, including extra budgetary resources required to develop the proposed Facilitating Mechanism, were presented to the Commission at its Ninth Session¹⁶.

2. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

16. At its Ninth Regular Session, the Commission "supported the proposal for a consultation to gather the views of stakeholders, on the possible activities of the facilitating mechanism, in line with International Treaty and the *Plan*, as well as the priorities established by the Commission."

17. This consultation was held at FAO Headquarters in Rome on 23-25 July, 2003. It was organized jointly by FAO and IPGRI. The consultation sought views and advice from the two main categories of stakeholders, potential beneficiaries of the Facilitation Mechanism, including National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), farmers' associations, private sector and regional representatives; and potential donors who may support the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* through the Facilitating Mechanism, including multilateral and bilateral agencies, foundations, private sector, and international civil society organizations.

18. The stakeholder report is presented in CGRFA/WG-PGR-2/03/5/Annex. Stakeholders generally agreed that the main objective of the Facilitating Mechanism should be to improve the mobilization of technical, financial or material resources to support the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* by countries.

19. Taking into account the views expressed by stakeholders, the following operational principles could guide implementation of this objective, whereby the Facilitating Mechanism:

- a) must add value to existing activities by identifying new opportunities and avoiding duplication of efforts;
- b) must be flexible in its operation to promote innovative partnerships and creative solutions to obstacles to *Global Plan of Action* implementation;
- c) must facilitate the engagement of more diverse interests in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* in order to catalyze the involvement and resources of new partners;
- d) should promote and assist collaboration and coordination of related activities among those engaged in the implementation of the ITPGRFA and other relevant international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity;

¹⁶ CGRFA-9/02/9 Add.1, *A Facilitating Mechanism for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action: Indicative Cost Estimates*.

- e) should respond to needs or demands from countries in respect of national sovereignty, and encourage national level ownership of implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. The Facilitating Mechanism should operate in such a manner that external resources are focused on a country's priority needs and complement a country's own investments in the implementation;
- f) should utilize the results of monitoring of the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, and use of indicators to assist in identifying gaps and priorities;
- g) should promote a results-based and adaptive approach to achieve implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, building on current arrangement and successes;
- h) should operate in a transparent manner;
- i) should assist in promoting understanding of the linkages between plant genetic resources conservation and utilization and sustainable development;
- j) should focus on activities for which a comparative advantage has been identified; and
- k) should promote the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, and provide a bridge among diverse interests particularly farmers, the plant breeding sector and the seed sector.

20. Stakeholders generally agreed that the following activities should be undertaken by the Facilitating Mechanism:

- a) Provide information on:
 - i) sources and availability of financial, technical, material and information resources;
 - ii) linkages among stakeholders;
 - iii) donor and recipient priorities, roles and conditions;
 - iv) best practices and standards and procedures;
 - v) success stories;
 - vi) networking; and
 - vii) plans, commitments, targets and indicators.
- b) Facilitate and catalyze new partnerships to implement the *Global Plan of Action* by promoting opportunities among a wide-range of interests involving international organizations; civil society organizations including farmers' organizations and foundations; plant breeders and the seed sector; and other private sector interests.
- c) Facilitate awareness at all levels, of the roles and values of plant genetic resources in order to mainstream plant genetic resources. Target audiences should be carefully identified based on identified comparative advantages in terms of promoting awareness.

- d) Develop options concerning the funding strategy of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

21. The following two activities were discussed by the stakeholders' meeting but no agreement was reached as to the role of the Facilitating Mechanism in undertaking them:

- a) Assist stakeholders to develop project proposals and package proposals to enhance their quality;
- b) Facilitate action planning at the national or wider level (by crops, thematic areas, and/or regions) in particular to:
 - i) assess the status and implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*;
 - ii) identify needs and gaps;
 - iii) assist in setting milestones and targets; and
 - iv) engage a wide-range of stakeholders.

22. Stakeholders reached agreement on what they considered to be an appropriate and effective operational structure, suggesting that:

- a) The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resource should provide guidance to the Facilitating Mechanism. In addition, mechanisms should be developed to enable partners, donors, countries and other key stakeholders to provide input and advice;
- b) The Facilitating Mechanism should be hosted by FAO and operated in partnership with IPGRI and possibly other organizations. It should be organized in a way that attracts and accommodates other organizations to become partners;
- c) The operational procedures should enable and encourage the direction of financial and other resources to support the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, and the effective and innovative operation of the Facilitating Mechanism, accommodating various modalities of resource flow, including long-term partnerships, project-by-project and so on;
- d) The operational structure should be designed to enable the Facilitating Mechanism to take greatest advantage of the available technical capacity within FAO and IPGRI, as well as other partners with the potential for activities to be out-sourced to achieve maximum efficiency;
- e) The operational structure should encourage the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, taking full advantage of available national and regional information and networks, including established National Focal Points for Plant Genetic Resources and the *Global Plan of Action*.

23. The Facilitating Mechanism will operate under the time frame of the FAO Medium Term Plan.

24. Further development of the Facilitating Mechanism to enhance implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* will be guided by the views of the Commission and its Working Group, and by the experience of ongoing activities to implement the *Plan*.

3. GUIDANCE REQUESTED FROM THE WORKING GROUP

25. Further development of the Facilitating Mechanism is expected to significantly enhance overall implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. In the light of the information provided in this document, members of the Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources may wish to review the Annex (CGRFA/WG-PGR-2/03/5/Annex) report of the Stakeholder Meeting referenced in para. 17 and provide advice about:

- a) the objective, operational principles and activities proposed for the Facilitating Mechanism (see paras. 17-19 above);
- b) whether or not the Facilitating Mechanism should undertake the activities summarized in para.20 above, for which the stakeholders' meeting did not reach agreement;
- c) the operational structure proposed in para.21 above;
- d) further work to be undertaken by the Secretariat and other operating partners; for example whether the Facilitating Mechanism should submit an operational plan to the Commission, and if so whether it should include the following items:
 - i) highest priority activities
 - ii) performance indicators and monitoring plan
 - iii) timeframe
 - iv) staffing and budget
 - v) key partners and their roles (whether FAO and IPGRI should continue to develop arrangements with potential partners and collaborators to operate the Facilitating Mechanism)
- e) encouraging financial support for the operation of the Facilitating Mechanism.