



## Fourth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

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### Statement by Ms Linda Collette Secretary

FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and  
Agriculture

Distinguished Delegates, Friends!

As many of you will recall, the Commission negotiated the International Treaty. This year on 3 November 2011, is the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty, which reminds us of how time flies, but also allows us to take stock and in doing so, to consider new challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us, that lie ahead of the Governing Body of the Treaty and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

The Governing Body of the Treaty and the FAO Commission share an important objective: Together with our Members/ Contracting Parties and our partners, we aim to conserve biodiversity for food and agriculture and to promote its sustainable use in support of global food security and sustainable development, for present and future generations. The Governing Body and the Commission are the intergovernmental bodies that address biodiversity for food and agriculture and, more specifically, genetic resources *for food and agriculture*. We share a truly Herculean task and the fundamental role of our bodies play is fully recognised by the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Commission deals with policy, sectoral and cross-sectoral matters related to the conservation and sustainable use of *all* genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture, including plant, animal, forest, aquatic, microbial and invertebrate genetic resources. The Treaty relates to plant genetic resources only. However, even though the two bodies differ as to the scope of their activities, their collaboration in the field of plant genetic resources has set an example of efficiency and an example of smooth coordination. Allow me to briefly illustrate this and to report at the same time on Commission-led activities which are of particular relevance to the Governing Body:

- The International Treaty requires its Contracting Parties to cooperate with the Commission in its periodic reassessment of the state of the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in order to facilitate the updating of the rolling Global Plan of Action. Only six months ago, the Director-General of FAO launched *The Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* which FAO produced under the guidance of its Commission. The *Second Report* which the Commission welcomed as the "authoritative assessment of this sector" will be of great value to everyone dealing with plant genetic resources, in particular the Treaty and its Contracting Parties. **At the same time the Second Report sets an excellent example of collaboration between our two bodies and of the synergies between our mandates.**

- The draft updated *Global Plan of Action*, as provided in information document 14 to this session, is another example of collaboration between our two bodies.** While, as requested by the Commission, the draft updated *Global Plan of Action* is primarily based on the gaps and needs identified in the *Second Report*, it does reflect the provisions of the Treaty and takes into account comments from consultations in the seven regions of FAO as well as inputs received from the Treaty Secretariat. At the end of next month, the draft updated *Global Plan of Action* will be reviewed by the Commission's Intergovernmental Technical Working Group which will also consider comments it received from a Joint Bureau Meeting of our Bureaus that was held last week. Chair, I am convinced that this update will make the *Global Plan of Action* even more useful and relevant as a supporting component to the Treaty and that it will help the Governing Body, the Commission and their partners to focus their efforts on priorities identified and coordinate their activities even better.

- A third example of good collaboration** are the draft revised *Genebank Standards*, as presented in information document 12 to this session. They are a product of joint efforts and of true collaboration between FAO, our secretariats, our Bureaus and our partners.

These examples show that collaboration is possible and beneficial.

A look ahead shows how crucial it will be in the future to capitalize on this collaboration:

- The Commission, at its forthcoming session in July of this year, will for the first time address the issue of climate change and genetic resources for food and agriculture in an overall and comprehensive manner. Genetic resources for food and agriculture have played and still play a rather minor role in the global climate change debate. But the world community needs to understand that climate change threatens the very basis of our food production and agricultural systems and, thus, the future of humankind. Together with their partners, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Treaty and the Commission need to join forces to make policy makers aware of this fact and need to ensure that climate change policies at national and global level reflect our common concerns.

- Collaboration between the Treaty and the Commission is also required in the implementation of the *Nagoya Protocol*. The Protocol itself suggests so. It recognizes “the interdependence of all countries with regard to genetic resources for food and agriculture and their special role and importance for achieving food security worldwide and for sustainable development or agriculture in the context of poverty alleviation and climate change.” And the Protocol acknowledges “the fundamental roles” of the International Treaty and the Commission “in this regard”. It will be important that we all work together to facilitate implementation at national level.

Chair, distinguished delegates, dear friends! The Commission, its Bureau and its Secretariat stand ready to fully collaborate with the Governing Body, its Bureau and its Secretariat in the implementation of the International Treaty and on all matters which are of relevance to the mandates of our bodies. I wish you a very successful and rewarding meeting.

Thank you.