



20 June 2013

Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Madam Secretary,

If we look back at when the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was established by Conference 30 years ago, few could have predicted what it would be like today.

It began in 1983 as the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources. But since 1995, the Commission has grown to encompass all animal and plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, including aquatic life, micro-organisms, and invertebrates.

The Commission is now one of the largest FAO bodies, with 177 Member Countries, plus the European Union. And its membership is still increasing.

It remains the only intergovernmental body to specifically address all matters related to genetic resources and biodiversity for food and agriculture.

Over the years, the Commission has delivered an impressive list of policy instruments to support these efforts.

Just two months ago, the Commission agreed on a Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources and invited the Conference to adopt it.

The Commission also negotiated the groundbreaking International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which was then adopted by the FAO Conference in 2001.



The Commission has also made progress on aquatic genetic resources, and is guiding preparation of a report on the state of the world's biodiversity for food and agriculture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Few could foresee the importance of this Commission, and few were aware of the challenges that we would face today.

For example, climate change affects agricultural productivity, stability, and livelihoods in many areas that already suffer from high levels of food insecurity.

Agriculture is often seen as “the culprit” in climate change discussions. But sustainable agriculture can also be part of the solution.

It must be.

Farmers, fishers, livestock-keepers, and forest-dependent communities play a central role in maintaining the resilience of genetic resources for food and agriculture, and adapting them to changes in climate and other conditions.

Through the Commission's work, countries have been working together with organizations, researchers and communities to recognize and support the efforts of those people who use and manage these precious resources every day.

We have done a lot, but we still need to do more. I am convinced that FAO and its Commission are ready for this challenge.

I thank all of you and your governments for your continued work to guarantee food security, improve lives and protect our precious resources.

Thank you.