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Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

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Item 6 of the Draft Provisional Agenda

COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Tenth Regular Session

Rome, 8-12 November 2004

**REPORTS FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ON THEIR POLICIES,
PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES ON AGRICULTURAL BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

PART III: INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture regularly receives reports from relevant international organizations, including FAO, on their policies, programmes and activities of relevance to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture. These reports contribute to understanding in this area between FAO and its Commission, and other international organizations, and to the development of appropriate mechanisms for cooperation and coordination.
2. FAO's own activities are reported in documents CGRFA-10/04/10.1, CGRFA-10/04/10.2 and CGRFA-10/04/10.3.
3. Reports from United Nations and other Inter-governmental Organizations are contained in document CGRFA-10/04/11.1, and reports from International Agricultural Research Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) are contained in document CGRFA-10/04/11.2.
4. This document presents reports on the activities undertaken by some Non-governmental Organizations in relation to genetic resources for food and agriculture. FAO has limited itself to compiling the reports as submitted. Each report is fully the responsibility of the organization submitting it.

II. ACTION GROUP ON EROSION, TECHNOLOGY, AND CONCENTRATION (ETC)

5. ETC (Action Group on Erosion, Technology, and Concentration) is a not-for-profit international civil society organization headquartered in Ottawa, Canada with offices in Mexico, United Kingdom, and the United States. Since 1977, ETC Group (originally as RAFI) has addressed socioeconomic issues related to the impact of new technologies on rural societies with a special emphasis on genetic resources for food and agriculture. ETC Group began working with governments in FAO and CGIAR on genetic resource policies in 1979 and has participated in all of the meetings that led up to the creation of the Commission by the FAO Conference in 1983 and all of the subsequent meetings of the Commission itself.
6. ETC is a founding member of the Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation Programme (CBDC) -- a consortium of communities and scientific organizations in 14 countries undertaking research and practical work to conserve and enhance rural biological diversity. For ten years now, the CBDC has led groundbreaking work on in situ genetic resource conservation and use. Together with GRAIN and ITDG, ETC Group is a co-convenor of a working group of civil society organizations around the world addressing agricultural research and genetic resource management through the facilities of the IPC (International Planning Committee of the NGO/CSO Forum that worked with governments in preparing for the 1996 and 2002 World Food Summits).
7. In 1999, ETC Group broadened its focus to explore new technologies and their possible impact on agriculture and rural development. Much of this work has related to nanotechnology - or nanobiotechnology - including the manipulation of nano scale materials. More than 200 companies are actively developing nanobiotechnology for food and agriculture worldwide. ETC Group monitors not only the technology itself but also the ownership and control of nanotechnology patents and organizations. Currently, ETC Group is working with a number of partners around the world to explore the potential impact of nanotechnology on biotechnology and to consider the possibility of new international regulations and agreements to ensure that nanoscale technologies benefit developing countries. Part of the work includes the possible

development of an International Convention for the Evaluation of New Technologies (ICENT). In the context of the Commission, ETC Group is exploring the practical and policy issues of molecular modification for genetic resource management and benefit-sharing.

III. CENTER FOR THE APPLICATION OF MOLECULAR BIOLOGY TO INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE (CAMBIA)

8. CAMBIA is an autonomous not-for-profit international technology research and development institute. CAMBIA was established in Canberra, Australia, in 1991 by molecular biologist Dr Richard Jefferson. CAMBIA has an established track record of delivering innovative technologies to the agricultural research community worldwide and is internationally recognised for its proactive approach to issues surrounding the interaction of biotechnology and intellectual property. CAMBIA has worked extensively with the Rockefeller Foundation to support local capacity in rice biotechnology within the developing world. CAMBIA has also worked with International Agencies including the World Bank, CGIAR, FAO and with the United Nations on projects including the Assessment for the UN Convention on Biological Diversity of Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURTs).
9. CAMBIA's institutional ethos is built around an awareness of the need and opportunity for local commitment to achieve lasting solutions to food security, agricultural and environmental problems. Local communities need the opportunity to engage in collectively creating solutions to their own challenges using tools that meet their operating constraints, and which may be uniquely suited to these tasks.
10. CAMBIA is addressing such challenges through its technology and intellectual property programs. The Genomics program is developing technologies for plant breeding and for generating agriculturally useful biodiversity in crop plants. The Molecular Technologies program is developing novel and improved gene transfer technologies that can be made widely available as alternatives to commercially inaccessible techniques, and also screenable and selectable marker genes for plant transformation.
11. While the potential to impact upon food, agricultural and environmental problems with biological technology of various kinds is undeniable, the discouraging lack of progress has at its core a structural failing associated with the use of science as an instrument of economic and social development. The explosion of patenting and the pace of discoveries and investment in biological sciences, while hinting at great opportunities, have created a thicket of Intellectual Property and proprietary rights and self-reinforcing barriers to innovation that continually marginalize those most at need.
12. The Information and Communications Technology industries, through the 'open source' approach, have evolved new innovation models that point to a productive way forward. The concepts of collaborative invention of core technology and its provision in a protected commons have now galvanised the software industry to new levels of creativity and democratisation in business and society, without compromising its profitability.
13. CAMBIA has developed the BIOS Initiative which will forge a new commons in enabling technology for biological innovations. Specifically the BIOS Initiative will:
 - explore and adapt new inclusive Intellectual Property sharing mechanisms;
 - articulate and promulgate public-good norms in biological technologies and commission new democratising technologies;
 - intervene with salient policy initiatives to increase fairness in access to the tools of innovation as a fundamental human right, and
 - acquire, commission and distribute inventions under new, public-good binding licenses and contracts to ensure the insulation of the new body of technology from appropriation.

IV. FRIENDS WORLD COMMITTEE FOR CONSULTATION (FWCC)

14. The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva and the Quaker International Affairs Programme (QIAP) in Ottawa, on behalf of the Friends World Committee for Consultation have continued their work on the impact of the changing international intellectual property regime on genetic resources for food and agriculture. This work is based on the need to make more just and equitable the process by which the IP rules are made. This requires full participation of the full range of stakeholders and informed negotiating processes across sectors.

15. As part of its work on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS) in the WTO, QUNO has facilitated meetings between negotiators in Geneva and those involved in negotiating the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to improve the mutual understanding of the impact of each on the other. QUNO has also published various discussion documents related to this, including during the last two years:

- *Food Security, Biotechnology and Intellectual Property: Unpacking some issues around TRIPS.*
- *Sui Generis Systems for Plant Variety Protection: Options under TRIPS.*

16. Both publications, as well as other materials are freely available from the QUNO website (www.geneva.quno.info) or by writing to QUNO.

17. The ability of countries to make use of the flexibilities available under the TRIPS agreement, such as to choose whether or not to allow patents on plants and animals, or to design a *sui generis* system for plant variety protection is being undermined in negotiations taking place outside the WTO framework. In partnership with QIAP, QUNO has been developing greater understanding of the impact on countries ability to choose how to manage their genetic resources for food and agriculture and biodiversity more generally by examining the pressures and negotiations leading to TRIPS plus requirements. Two publications have dealt with these:

- *Regional and bilateral agreements and a TRIPS-plus world: the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).*
- *Multilateral agreements and a TRIPS-plus world: The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).*

18. Again both are available from the QUNO and QIAP web sites (www.qiap.ca). As the International Treaty comes into effect in June 2004 both organisations are continuing to promote dialogue between the different constituencies dealing with trade and intellectual property, biodiversity and agriculture negotiations. This is needed to avoid developments in the intellectual property regime undermining the ability of the other treaties to safeguard the biodiversity and genetic resources needed for food and agriculture.

V. INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENT (IFOAM)

19. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) is the worldwide umbrella organization uniting over 750 member organizations and institutions in some 103 countries (please refer to Web page - www.ifoam.org). The federation's activities on genetic resources are integrated into work around biodiversity, and IFOAM actively cooperates on this issue with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) in Germany. These organizations have held two international conferences (1999 and 2002) on the relationship between organic agriculture and biodiversity. Conference

proceedings have been published and are available from IFOAM. In September 2004, the organizations will join forces with UNEP for the 3rd International Conference on Biodiversity in Nairobi, Kenya.

20. In regard to genetic resources and food, IFOAM is working together with, among others, the international Slow Food movement, and is also engaged in the drafting of a chapter on biodiversity for the IFOAM Basic Standards. A task force of experts is coordinating this latter activity.

21. A joint IUCN-IFOAM working group on biodiversity, based on a mutual agreement, is in the process of being established. In a similar vein, the federation has also published a comprehensive four-page brochure on the relationship of organic agriculture and biodiversity, which is available on the web page or at request from the Head Office.

22. IFOAM is also cooperating on biodiversity-related matters with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In July of 2004, the federation, along with the FAO and the International Seed Federation (ISF), successfully organized the 1st International Conference on Organic Seeds, bringing 270 participants from 57 countries to the FAO Headquarters in Rome. Among the key themes were biodiversity and genetic resources.

23. In addition, IFOAM is working actively to protect genetic resources from the invasive threat of genetic engineering technologies, which are completely banned in organic farming and food processing. We are lobbying for a total ban in agriculture and food processing.

24. The biodiversity activities of IFOAM are coordinated by the federation's Vice-President, Gerald Herrmann and Director for International Relations, Bernward Geier (b.geier@iffoam.org).

VI. INTERNATIONAL SEED FEDERATION (ISF)

25. The International Seed Federation (ISF) is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation that serves as an international forum where issues of interest and concern to the seed industry are discussed. It traces its history back to 1924 when FIS (International Seed Trade Federation) was established. Formed in June 2002 by the merger between FIS and ASSINSEL (International Association of Plant Breeders), ISF represents the mainstream of the world seed trade and plant breeders' community in 69 countries.

26. As genetic resources are an important source of breeding material for use in the development of new varieties of plants, ISF firmly believes in the maintenance and facilitated access to genetic resources for food and agriculture, and in the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use. It welcomes the entry into force of the International Treaty (IT) on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and takes pride in having contributed significantly to its successful negotiation through the ASSINSEL proposal for a multilateral system for access to genetic resources. As a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) is an essential element of the multilateral system of the IT, ISF has prepared a document, adopted unanimously by its members, based on its experience that it hopes will assist the Expert Group established by FAO to draft an MTA.

27. ISF not only works closely with FAO but also other international organisations on matters related to genetic resources. In a joint initiative with the System-wide Information Network for Genetic Resources (SINGER) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center (AVRDC), AVRDC's extensive information on vegetable germplasm is being made 'online' through SINGER. It participates in the Genetic Resource Policy Committee and the Genetic Resource Policy Initiative of the CGIAR.

28. Through their research and breeding activities ISF members have steadily increased the yield potential and stability of crops, introduced resistance to pests and pathogens, and enhanced tolerance to abiotic factors, thereby contributing to food security and preserving fragile ecosystems from over exploitation. An ISF publication in 2002 titled *Seeds for Mankind* documents some examples of these activities and is available on the ISF website (www.worldseed.org).

VII. INTERMEDIATE TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT GROUP (ITDG)

29. ITDG is a specialist international development NGO founded in 1966. ITDG works on a range of technological issues with and in support of communities in developing countries, from regional offices in East Africa (Nairobi), Southern Africa (Harare), South America (Lima) and South Asia (Colombo). In addition there are national offices in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sudan. ITDG's headquarters are in the UK.

30. ITDG has worked on agricultural biodiversity issues for more than 15 years with farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk in many countries. ITDG has also been actively engaged in following the negotiations of the International Seed treaty (ITPGRFA), the wider work of the CGRFA and its technical working groups and the development of the Agricultural Biodiversity agenda by the CBD. See www.itdg.org/?id=advocacy .

31. Through publications, fieldwork, seminars and policy advocacy, ITDG promotes the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity not only for food production but also for providing sustainable livelihoods, living landscapes and life support systems (biological and ecosystem services). ITDG seeks to support (especially) small-scale producers to develop and maintain diverse agroecological production systems, which both generate and depend upon agricultural biodiversity and are an essential component of food sovereignty. ITDG also joins with other CSOs and Social Movements in challenging the processes that threaten agricultural biodiversity, and the integrity and free-flow of GRFA, not least the promotion and spread of monocultural industrial agricultural systems, proprietary seeds and breeds and GMOs.

32. ITDG is concerned that, now in force, the International Seed Treaty be implemented fairly, equitably and with sufficient new financial resources in order to facilitate, in particular, the work by farmers in developing and conserving PGRFA on-farm, as resolved by the Leipzig GPA. In order to achieve this, ITDG believes it will require, among other things, full implementation of Farmers' Rights and the exclusion from patentability of all PGRFA. See www.ukabc.org/itpgrfa29june2004.htm.

33. Now the Treaty is law, ITDG supports the refocusing of CGRFA priorities towards the development, conservation and sustainable use of livestock breeds and associated species, especially by pastoralists, herders and farmers. In 2003, ITDG co-organised a workshop in Kenya with the League for Pastoral Peoples for leaders of pastoral communities and traditional livestock breeders from Africa and Asia. One outcome was the Karen Commitment to Livestock Keepers' Rights www.ukabc.org/karen.htm. This promotes the conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture, including associated species, and the genes they contain (AnGRFA). It calls on FAO to start negotiating a legally-binding agreement on AnGRFA, in harmony with the CBD, that will, inter alia, provide international legally-binding recognition of Livestock Keepers' Rights.

34. ITDG maintains the UK agricultural biodiversity coalition (UKabc) website on behalf of the UK Food Group www.ukabc.org. This website covers all issues relating to agricultural biodiversity for food and livelihood security and food sovereignty.

VIII. THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOREST RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS (IUFRO)

35. The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) is a global network for forest science co-operation that unites more than 15,000 scientists in about 600 IUFRO member organizations in more than 100 countries.

36. In January 1998, the IUFRO Task Force on the “Management and Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources” was established in order to gather and synthesize information about the management and conservation of forest genetic resources (FGR) and to detect knowledge gaps. The Task Force is co-ordinated by Dr. Judy Loo, Ecological Geneticist at Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service.

37. The long-term objectives of the Task Force are to:

- Collect, evaluate and organize the scientific knowledge necessary for the management of forests for sustainable utilization and conservation of the genetic diversity of forest trees; and
- Promote the integration of forest genetic considerations into overall resource management.

38. As described in the report of IUFRO submitted to the Ninth Regular Session of the CGRFA, a questionnaire had been sent out to IUFRO Member Organizations in spring 2000 in order to assess the state of the art in research on management and conservation of forest genetic resources in all parts of the world. The results of the questionnaire gave an impression of the unsatisfactory state of scientific knowledge on the importance of forest genetic resources in various research areas and forest management. Results indicated that the conservation and utilization of gene resources are perceived as mainly biological and ecological issues which have limited linkage with policy and land use, economy, etc.

39. Taking into account the need to make available information more complete and to enhance its reliability, the questionnaire was sent out to IUFRO Member Organizations a second time in summer 2001. To the extent that it is possible to generalize, the results of the questionnaire indicated that the effects of management and operations on forest genetic resources are better understood than other aspects such as policy, economics, ecology, or biology; and more is known regarding major species than minor species.

40. The work of the Task Force currently focuses on preparing a state-of-the-art report on research on forest tree genetic diversity on the basis of results of the questionnaire, and drawing from the literature published. Major research gaps will be identified and discussed in the paper. The results of the work of the Task Force will be presented at the XXII IUFRO World Congress, to be held on 8-13 August 2005 in Brisbane, Australia.

41. More information about IUFRO and the Task Force “Management and Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources” can be found at www.iufro.org/taskforce/. Detailed information about the XXII IUFRO World Congress is available at www.iufro2005.com.

IX. THE ASSOCIATED COUNTRY WOMEN OF THE WORLD (ACWW)

42. ACWW has maintained Consultative Status with FAO since 1947. It is the largest international organisation for rural women and is active in over 70 countries. ACWW works in partnership with its Member Societies, the majority of whom depend on agriculture for a living.

43. At its 24th Triennial Conference held in Tasmania, Australia in March 2004, the following Resolutions were adopted:

- **Productive Agriculture**
Be it resolved that ACWW encourage the international community to pay more attention to the destruction of productive agriculture throughout the developing countries of the world, and take steps to reverse this trend.
- **Agriculture Biotechnology**
Be it resolved that ACWW will support the use of biotechnology in agricultural production where it has proven benefits to consumers, the environment and food producers (particularly women), and will encourage the acceptance of biotechnology where its ethical, social, economic and ecological implications have been fully debated and understood by all stakeholders.