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OUTLINE OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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OUTLINE OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The FAO Conference, at its Twenty-sixth session, agreed that a Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture should be developed within the context of the Global System¹. At its Twenty-seventh session, the Conference agreed that this should be done through a country-driven process in preparation for the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, which will be held in Leipzig, Germany in June 1996. The Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, which provides guidance on the preparatory process, requested, at its first extraordinary session in November 1994, that an outline of the Global Plan of Action be prepared for its consideration at its sixth regular session. This discussion paper has been prepared by the Secretariat in response to that request.

2. The outline presented here provides a framework for the preparation of the Global Plan of Action, and provides indicative examples of its possible contents. It is not intended that this outline prejudice the outcome of the country-driven preparatory process. The final form and content of the Global Plan of Action will depend on *inter alia* : deliberations of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and its Working Group, the content of Country Reports on PGR; sub-regional synthesis reports and the outcome of sub-regional and regional meetings; and commissioned studies and scientific consultations.

II. BACKGROUND

3. In line with the aims and strategy of the Fourth International Technical Conference and its preparatory process, as endorsed by the FAO Conference at its twenty-seventh session in 1993, the Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources (GPA/PGR) will complement and draw upon the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources (SW/PGR)². Building upon the skeleton programme of action in Agenda 21, it will:

- i) propose policies and strategies for the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture at the national, regional and global levels, with particular attention to the linkages between conservation programmes, and utilization capabilities and programmes;
- ii) assist countries in elaborating plans or programmes of priority action for conservation activities at the national level;
- iii) assist countries in strengthening national capabilities for utilizing plant genetic resources, and their national plant breeding and seed production capacities;
- iv) propose appropriate and feasible measures to make the Global System for Plant Genetic Resources more effective; and
- v) include costed programmes, projects and activities, to be financed by an international fund and other mechanisms.

4. At its first extra-ordinary session in 1994, the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources

¹ See Document CPGR-6/95/4

² An outline of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources is provided in document CPGR-6/95/10 for consideration by the Commission.

emphasized the importance of support for sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources as a major objective for the Global Plan, in addition to support for their conservation. Other suggested elements for the Global Plan of Action included training and the transfer of technology. In all these activities, the Commission stated that particular attention should be given to supporting farmers and their communities directly³.

III. OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

5. It is proposed that the Global Plan of Action would consist of a preamble, three major parts and an annex:

- The **Preamble** might be in the form of a **Declaration** which would set the tone for the Global Plan of Action. The Fourth International Technical Conference might adopt a Declaration which would provide a brief statement recognizing the importance of plant genetic resources and the need for action to ensure their conservation and sustainable utilization. The Declaration would be concise and over-arching. It might be a few paragraphs or a few pages. The Declaration might emphasize links with food security and/or sustainable agriculture⁴.

- **Part I: A Framework for Action**

This part would provide the rationale for the Plan. It would include the following elements (further details are provided below):

Section A: a statement of overall **aims**;

Section B: a statement of **principles**;

(The aims and principles would probably be derived from existing instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources);

Section C: a **strategy** to be considered in the implementation of the Global Plan

Section D: the **major areas of action** of the Global Plan;

Section E: lists of **criteria and priorities for the allocation of funds** to programmes and projects; and

Section F: an **indicative budget**.

- **Part II: Details of activities**

This part would provide details of activities required to meet the objectives of the Global Plan of Action. It would constitute the main technical body of the Plan. The activities would follow logically from the recommendations of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources according to the Framework for Action. Ideally, the following information would be given for each of the main areas of activity defined in Part I:

- **Basis for the activity:** statement of the problem; summary of relevant conclusions from SW/PGR; and relevant recommendations from Agenda 21 etc.;
- **Activity:** specific objectives; approach; statement of assumptions; sub-activities; and expected benefits;
- **Implementation of the activity:** priority level and resource allocation; and list of indicative projects and costings

³ CPGR/94/Ex1/REP. This is consistent with Resolution 5/89 on Farmers' Rights.

⁴ Such a Declaration might refer to the invaluable nature of plant genetic resources as the basis for sustained and increased food production, and the need to improve the utilization of these resources for such purposes. It might also refer to the need to maintain genetic diversity as a means of adaptation to future environmental or socio-economic changes, and the consequent moral imperative of conserving resources/diversity for future generations. It might acknowledge the roles played by generations of farmers, farming communities and indigenous populations in conserving, utilizing and improving plant genetic resources, as well as the role of scientific plant breeding. It might note that the benefits derived from the use of plant genetic resources are not fully appropriated by those who manage, use and conserve them, and therefore mechanisms are needed to correct this situation, in the interests of both equity and conservation.

- **Part III: Policy Recommendations**

This part would provide policy recommendations required, in conjunction with the Activities of Part II, to meet the objectives of the Plan. Policy recommendations are required because project and programme activities aimed at promoting the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources will ultimately be successful only if the external policy environment is favourable. Policy recommendations would be drawn up on the basis of guidance by the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, the conclusions of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, inputs from the Country Reports and Regional or Sub-regional meetings, and other inputs.

- **Annex:**

A provisional project portfolio with indicative projects and programmes would be provided. Depending on the preparatory process, actual projects or programmes might be proposed for the Global Plan of Action. Some of these projects might have financing secured, others may require financing to be secured. Once the Global Plan of Action has been adopted and financial resources made available, this would, be replaced by an agreed portfolio, assembled from the set of Activities (Part II) by the appropriate decision making body, according to the agreed criteria and priorities.

IV. CONTENT OF PART I OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

6. At this stage of the preparatory process, detailed proposals are made only for Part I of the Global Plan of Action: "Framework for Action" which provides the policy context for the Plan including aims, strategy, priorities and criteria as well as indicating its major areas of activity.

(A) Framework for Action: Aims

7. This would be a general statement of broad aims. The Global Plan of Action should be consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity and with the International Undertaking⁵.

8. The aims might therefore include elements such as:

- to promote the conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) as a basis for food security;
- to promote better utilization of PGRFA, in order to promote development and to reduce hunger and poverty in developing countries;
- to ensure a better sharing of the benefits derived from PGRFA with the countries, farmers and communities which supply such PGRFA, through improved utilization, including through plant breeding, and through other means;

and, in order to meet these objectives:

- to mobilize the necessary financial resources;
- to facilitate access to PGRFA and to related technologies.

(B) Framework for Action: Principles

⁵ With respect to the International Undertaking, special attention might be given to the FAO Resolution 5/89 on Farmers' Rights, annex two of the Undertaking, which endorses the concept of Farmers' Rights (Farmers' Rights mean rights arising from the past, present and future contributions of farmers in conserving, improving, and making available plant genetic resources, particularly those in the centres of origin/diversity.) in order to:

- ensure that the need for conservation is globally recognized and that sufficient funds for these purposes will be available;
- assist farmers and farming communities, in all regions of the world, but especially in the areas of origin/diversity of plant genetic resources, in the protection and conservation of their plant genetic resources, and of the natural biosphere;
- allow farmers, their communities, and countries in all regions, to participate fully in the benefits derived, at present and in the future, from the improved use of plant genetic resources, through plant breeding and other scientific methods.

9. This section would include the principles on which the Plan is based. Like the statement of aims, to a large extent these would probably be drawn from the Convention, (in particular its preamble) as well the International Undertaking.
10. The following elements might be included:
- recognition of the value of PGRFA (intrinsic, ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic); importance for global, national and local food security and for sustainable development;
 - reaffirmation of state sovereign rights over their own genetic resources, and state's responsibility for conserving their PGRFA and for using them in a sustainable manner;
 - reaffirmation of the precautionary principle: the need to anticipate, and react effectively to the causes of significant genetic erosion;
 - recognition of interdependence of countries for essential PGRFA and common concern of humankind for their conservation and sustainable utilization;
 - recognition of the importance of, and the need to promote, international, regional and global cooperation among States and intergovernmental organizations and the non-governmental sector;
 - acknowledgment that the provision of new and additional financial resources and appropriate access to relevant technologies required especially to meet the needs of developing countries;
 - endorsement of the concept of Farmers' Rights (Farmers' Rights mean rights arising from the past, present and future contributions of farmers in conserving, improving, and making available plant genetic resources, particularly those in the centres of origin/diversity);
 - recognition of the close and traditional dependence of many indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles on PGRFA, and the desirability of sharing equitably benefits arising from the use of relevant traditional knowledge, innovations and practices;
 - recognition also of the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for PGRFA conservation and utilization.

(C) Framework for Action: Strategy

11. This section would define the overall strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The overall strategy would be in line with the principles of the Framework for Action and on the basis of an analysis of the current situation as provided in the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, taking into account opportunities and limitations identified in the Report⁶.
12. Such an overall strategy might include the following elements:
- (1) a country-based approach emphasizing action at the national and community levels where possible, including through capacity building, with complementary action - mainly coordination - at the international level;
 - (2) conservation for development, emphasizing actions which strengthen synergistic links between utilization and conservation. (This might be promoted *inter alia*, through identifying and overcoming obstacles to greater use of conserved PGRFA; and integrating PGRFA conservation into strategies for plant breeding and seed production and distribution;

⁶ Implementation of the Global Plan of Action, at any point in time, is limited by the capacity of human resources and institutions and by the available technical and scientific methods. These would have been assessed in the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, and would be referred to here. Of course, expansion of human and institutional capacities through training and capacity building, and development of technical and scientific methods through research would be major modalities of the Global Plan of Action. Nevertheless, implementation at any point in time will be limited by existing capacities at that time.

- (3) access and exchange, emphasizing actions which facilitate access to and exchange of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and related technologies and information at community, national, regional and world levels as appropriate. (This approach to be coupled with fair and equitable sharing of benefits with the providers of PGRFA and related technologies and information);
- (4) participatory approaches emphasizing actions which enhance the participation of farmers, plant breeders and other relevant users of PGRFA through the inclusion of formal and informal sectors in the processes of implementing the Global Plan of Action;
- (5) decentralization and rationalization, emphasizing actions which promote, as appropriate, the decentralization of activities towards countries and the level of the user, and rationalization of activities to improve efficiency and reduce duplication.

(D) Framework for Action: Major areas of action and specific objectives

13. This section would outline the major areas of action of the Global Plan. To a large extent, these activities would follow from the aims and strategy. However, the activities would also be determined as a result of the country-driven process, and from the Report on the State of the World's PGRFA, taking into account the existing international consensus, such as that achieved in UNCED (Agenda 21 Programme area 14G: "The Conservation and Sustainable utilization of Plant Genetic Resources as part of the Chapter "Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development") and the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, as well as inputs such as the Global Initiative for the Security and Sustainable Use of PGRFA (of the Keystone Dialogue Series), recommendations of the US National Academy of Sciences Study on Managing Global Genetic Resources and other sources.

14. An indicative list of the major areas of action is provided below:

- i) monitor genetic diversity and erosion and establish an early warning system in order to mitigate loss of genetic resources, and identify sites for collecting or *in situ* conservation;
- ii) explore and collect important and/or threatened plant genetic resources;
- iii) ensure the long-term safety of existing germplasm collections through a programme of regeneration and safe duplication;
- iv) establish and/or strengthen germplasm conservation facilities, technologies, and programmes as part of an integrated conservation and utilization strategy;
- v) characterize, evaluate and document germplasm collections;
- vi) identify and strive to overcome the obstacles for the utilization of conserved genetic resources in order to promote their use;
- vii) develop methodologies for and promote on-farm and community-level conservation and use of plant genetic resources as part of an integrated conservation and utilization strategy;
- viii) promote the *in situ* conservation of wild plants as part of an integrated conservation strategy;
- ix) strengthen plant breeding capabilities, utilize greater diversity in plant breeding and promote approaches to plant breeding which promote the maintenance of diversity;
- x) improve the availability of good quality seeds and other planting material to farmers, including

through the development of appropriate technologies;

- xi) improve conservation and utilization of under-utilized species and local crop and promote crop diversification;
- xii) facilitate access to plant genetic resources, information and technologies;
- xiii) promote the development of legal and other mechanisms to protect the rights of providers of germplasm;
- xiv) develop methodologies for the economic valuation of plant genetic resources and for the realization of these values;
- xv) promote national and regional planning for the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources and integration with planning for sustainable agriculture;

15. Specific, concrete objectives would be developed for each area of activity. As far as possible, these would be formulated so that they could be used to monitor and assess the progress of the Plan. Details of the activities would be developed in Part II of the Global Plan of Action.

16. For each of the major areas of activity, various modalities of implementation would be employed, including:

- (a) National Capacity Building and Development, including training and other forms of human resource development, institutional development, and physical capacity building. In accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity, and with recommendations of the Commission⁷, the main level for implementation of the GPA would be at the national level, including action taken at the level of the community, farm etc. This modality would include material support to national programmes and technical assistance to countries. It might include a specific allocation for action at the Community level.
- (b) Support to Sub-Regional and Regional Networks and Cooperation. This modality would include material support and technical assistance provided on a regional or sub-regional basis, including the strengthening of networks and other cooperative arrangements.
- (c) International Cooperation and Coordination. Whilst the emphasis of the Global Plan of Action would be at the local, national and regional levels, a certain amount of international coordination is required. This stems in part from factors such as the interdependence of countries for access to PGRFA and the nature of PGRFA as a global public good. Such activity might include mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of germplasm, information and technologies, as well as activities such as global programmes to ensure regeneration and safe duplication of *ex situ* collections. The Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources might provide the framework for international coordination including through components such as the World Information and Early Warning System and the International Network of *ex situ* Collections.
- (d) Policy formulation and implementation. Policies might need to be developed both for the national and international levels in order to promote conservation of genetic resources, transfer of technologies etc.
- (e) Scientific, Socioeconomic and Legal Research. The field of PGRFA is advancing rapidly both

⁷ The Commission agreed at its fourth session, that the Global Plan of Action would be a global framework for local, national and regional activities, to be implemented by national institutions, supported, when appropriate, by FAO and other intergovernmental, as well as non-governmental institutions.

in technical/scientific areas, and in policy/legal matters. Further research may be warranted as part of the Global Plan of Action in order to improve the tools available for the conservation and sustainable utilization of PGRFA.

(E) Framework for Action: Criteria and priorities for allocation of funds

17. This section would contain agreed criteria and priorities for funding of activities as part of the Global Plan of Action. Projects would be constituted from the list of Activities proposed in Part II according to these criteria and priorities.

18. The following criteria are provided as indicative examples. They are largely derived from the criteria and priorities for funding as agreed by the first Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity⁸.

All projects and programmes should be one of two types:

EITHER they should have an integrated approach (including institutional and human capacity building, promotion of national strategies, policies and plans for priority action, socio-dimensions such as those related to poverty alleviation) addressing both conservation and utilization

OR they should address clearly identified factors which limit the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, or address emergency situations.

Additionally, where appropriate, projects should:

- promote the conservation and/or sustainable use of indigenous species in the centres of origin and other areas of high diversity in PGRFA;
- promote the conservation of and sustainable use of PGRFA in environmentally vulnerable areas such as arid and semi-arid and mountainous areas;
- identify PGRFA of actual or potential socio-economic importance under threat and processes which threaten such PGRFA;
- strengthen the conservation, management and/or sustainable use of PGRFA under threat;
- promote the sustainability of project benefits;
- include innovative measures, such as economical incentives, aiming at conservation and/or sustainable use of PGRFA (including measures which assist developing countries to address situations where opportunity costs are incurred by local communities and measures to identify ways and means by which these can be compensated);
- strengthen the involvement of local and indigenous people in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA (including, where appropriate through the involvement of local non-governmental organizations and community organizations, and with particular attention to the role of women in PGRFA conservation and use);
- have national priority status and contribute to fulfilling the obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Undertaking;
- offer a potential contribution to experience in the conservation of and sustainable use of PGRFA which may have application elsewhere;
- contribute to building cooperation at-the sub-regional, regional and international levels;
- promote utilization of local and regional expertise;
- promote cooperation for joint development of, access to, and transfer of technology;
- encourage scientific excellence;
- provide access to other International, national and/or private sector funds and scientific and technical cooperation.

⁸ Policy, strategy, programme priorities and eligibility criteria for access to and utilization of financial resources, UNEP/CBD/COP/1/17, Annex I.

19. Priorities might also be set for species and for areas of diversity. More detailed lists of priorities would be provided for each activity area in part II.

20. The Global Plan of Action will be implemented over a number of years, and be updated periodically. The Plan would take account of the fact that activities vary in urgency, as well as in importance as well as in their total resource requirement. For instance, some activities such as characterization might require a large amount of financial resources over the first, say, five or ten year period, in order to deal with the "back-log" of samples. In subsequent periods however, lower levels of financial support might be required for such activities on a routine basis. On the other hand, for activities such as on-farm conservation, where a substantial period of research might be required before any large scale introduction of projects is justified, a gradually increasing demand for financial resources might be required and planned for.

(F) Framework for Action: Indicative Budget

21. This section would include an indicative budget for the main elements of the Global Plan of Action⁹. More detailed costings would be included for each activity in Part II. Various budget options might be presented, pending final agreement on the amount of financial resources which will be made available.

22. At least to some extent, the implementation of the Global Plan of Action will depend on the availability of net additional financial resources. The Global Plan of Action should, therefore, be accompanied by a Statement or Agreement on Financing¹⁰.

V. FINANCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

23. The basis of the financial and institutional arrangements required for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action have been agreed previously by the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and endorsed by the FAO Conference through FAO Resolution 3/91 and related decisions¹¹. However the final arrangements will have to be negotiated and agreed between countries, perhaps in the context of the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking, currently underway through the Commission. Were the International Undertaking to become a protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the financial and institutional arrangements of the Global Plan of Action might then be linked, in some way, to the financial and institutional arrangements of the Convention. Document CPGR-6/95/9 explores legal and institutional matters related to the revision of the International Undertaking.

24. Without prejudice to future decisions regarding financial and institutional arrangements for the

⁹ The Commission agreed at its fourth session, that the Global plan of Action should include a general budget, as well as priority programmes and projects.

¹⁰ Whilst the requirements for financing might, in part, be determined by the costing of the Global Plan of Action, the magnitude of the net additional resources available might be influenced or determined by the negotiations between countries on the revision of the International Undertaking. The Statement or Agreement on Financing would, therefore, constitute one link between the Global Plan of Action and the revised Undertaking.

¹¹ Through Resolution 3/91, annex 3 to the International Undertaking, FAO Conference endorsed (.....):

- that Farmers' Rights will be implemented through an international fund on plant genetic resources which will support plant genetic conservation and utilization programmes, particularly, but not exclusively, in the developing countries;
- that the effective conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources is a pressing and permanent need, and, therefore, the resources for the international fund as well as for other funding mechanisms should be substantial, sustainable and based on the principles of equity and transparency;
- that through the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, the donors of genetic resources, funds and technology will determine and oversee the policies, programmes and priorities of the fund and other funding mechanisms, with the advice of the appropriate bodies.

The Commission also agreed, at its fourth session in 1991, that implementation of Farmers' Rights be based on a scientifically sound Global Plan of Action.

Global Plan of Action two components can be identified in line with FAO Resolution 3/91 (Chart 1).

- a financing mechanism. As noted above (para 23), it is expected that the implementation of the Global Plan of Action would require both net additional financial resources as well as re-allocation of some existing resources. According to Resolution 3/91, funding should be "should be substantial, sustainable and based on the principles of equity and transparency". Therefore the implementation of the Plan will require an agreement on financing, either in the context of the revised International Undertaking, if agreement on this is reached in time, or through an independent Statement on Financing¹².
- a decision making body for the allocation of resources. This body would monitor the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and allocate resources based on the priorities and criteria set out in the Plan. According to Resolution 3/91, this body would be the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and would "determine and oversee the policies, programmes and priorities of the fund and other funding mechanisms". In the case that the International Undertaking becomes a protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity, this body would be the parties to the protocol¹³. In either case, the Commission, or a successor body, might act on the advice of a scientific and technical advisory body.

25. The full implementation of the Plan is also likely to be premised on certain assumptions concerning the availability of plant genetic resources, which should be consistent with the agreement on mutually agreed terms of access, being negotiated as part of the revision of the International Undertaking.

VI. ISSUES FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMISSION

26. The Guidance of the Commission is sought on the general approach proposed for the preparation of the Global Plan of Action, and in particular on the proposed "Framework for Action" which provides its policy context including issues such as aims, strategy, priorities and criteria.

27. The Guidance of the Commission is also sought concerning the scope of the Global Plan of Action. It was previously agreed that the Global Plan of Action should cover "the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture", including forest species. The inclusion of the latter has been questioned.

¹² A number of possible sources of funding for the GPA/PGR might be identified. Some of these might be accessed on an *ad hoc* basis, others after negotiations in the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources including those on the revised International Undertaking, and in the Conference of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity. Amongst possible sources might be included funds from the Global Environmental Facility (whether or not formally linked to the Convention), and other Existing bilateral and multilateral financing and reallocation of existing bilateral and multilateral financing, new bilateral and multilateral financing developed through the negotiations in the Commission including those on the revised Undertaking and the ICPGR Process; domestic expenditure including funds released through the reallocation of existing budget as well as new resources, and finally funds generated through new mechanisms (such as taxes, surcharges on products of PGRFA, share of royalties from IPRs, etc).

¹³ See also document CPGR-6/95/9 on Stage III of the Revision of the International Undertaking.