

August 2009



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Item 11 of the Provisional Agenda

COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Twelfth Regular Session

Rome, 19 -23 October 2009

COOPERATION WITH THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since 1993, cooperation between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has been strong and effective, with FAO being a key partner and contributor to the implementation of the CBD. A number of measures have facilitated cooperation, including the establishment of a Memorandum of Cooperation in 1997, which was revised in 2005.¹ The revised Memorandum recognizes the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as the international forum where governments specifically address all components of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture.
2. At the intergovernmental level, the Commission has a lead role in the cooperation between FAO and the Conference of the Parties of the CBD. The Commission and the Conference of the Parties to the CBD have regularly recognized the importance of cooperation between FAO and the CBD and have called for the development of mutually supportive activities.
3. This document first reviews, in Section II, the recent request to strengthen cooperation between the CBD and FAO and its Commission, including in particular through the preparation of a joint work plan between the Secretariats. The process to prepare such joint work plan and the contents of the work plan are presented in section III. Section IV describes key areas which the Commission may wish to consider to strengthen cooperation with the CBD.

II. RECENT REQUEST TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CBD AND FAO AND ITS COMMISSION

4. The Commission, at its Eleventh Regular Session in June 2007, recommended further strengthening of cooperation between FAO and its Commission, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, acknowledging the need for complementarity and mutual support.² It specifically recommended “a joint work plan on biodiversity for food and agriculture between FAO and its Commission and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity” and requested this recommendation be forwarded to the Conference of the Parties to the CBD.³
5. At the same Session, the Commission adopted major milestones and outputs to be addressed in its Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) over its next five sessions, and considered that the MYPOW would provide an excellent basis for the joint work plan.⁴
6. The first meeting of the Bureau of the Commission was held at the same time as the Thirteenth Session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the CBD, which was hosted by FAO in February 2008. This allowed holding for the first time, an informal meeting between the Bureau of the Commission and the SBSTTA Bureau. The Chair of the Commission and the Chair of SBSTTA both noted the effective past collaboration between FAO and the CBD, and stressed the need for this to continue. In considering the cooperation between the Commission and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Bureau of the Commission requested that a joint work plan be developed with the

¹ See the document, *Memorandum of Cooperation between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity* (CGRFA-11/07/Inf.11).

² CGRFA-11/07/Report para. 79.

³ CGRFA-11/07/Report para. 80.

⁴ CGRFA-11/07/Report Para. 80.

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with a view to consider it at a joint meeting with the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD or the Bureau of SBSTTA.⁵

7. SBSTTA, at its Thirteenth Session, recommended that in response to the Commission's request a joint work plan on biodiversity for food and agriculture be prepared.⁶

8. Following on SBSTTA's recommendation, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, at its Ninth Conference in May 2008, requested that the Executive Secretary work with FAO and the Secretariat of the Commission "to prepare a joint work plan on biodiversity for food and agriculture that would assist Parties to *inter alia*; streamline reporting requirements and facilitate dialogue at the international, regional and national levels among bodies dealing with the environment and agriculture, while respecting each other's mandates and intergovernmental authority."⁷

III. JOINT WORK PLAN WITH THE CBD SECRETARIAT

9. The Secretariat of FAO and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity have jointly prepared the joint work plan, given in the document, *Joint work plan of the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.⁸ Within FAO, all relevant technical departments who are represented in FAO's internal MYPOW task force have participated in the elaboration of the work plan.

10. The aim of the joint work plan is to enhance synergies in the implementation of the Commission's MYPOW and the CBD programmes of work, including work on cross cutting issues. The first phase of the joint work plan covers a relatively short period of time (2009-2011) and focuses in preparing for collaboration beyond 2011, on consolidating on-going collaboration as an immediate task for the mutual benefit of both partners.

11. The joint work plan contains general provisions to enhance cooperation between the CBD and FAO, and addresses five major focus areas: assessments of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture; targets and indicators; best practices for the management of agricultural biodiversity; micro-organisms and invertebrates, including the international initiatives on soil biodiversity and pollinators; and climate change and genetic resources for food and agriculture.

12. The joint work plan includes provision for organizing a joint meeting with representatives of environment and agriculture to discuss its second phase. Such meeting could be held by bringing together the Bureau of the Commission and the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD. The Commission may wish to request its Secretary to explore with the Executive Secretary of the CBD the possibility of holding a joint meeting of the Bureaus to discuss future cooperation.

13. The Bureau of the Commission reviewed a draft of the joint work plan at its second meeting in July 2009. It welcomed the joint work plan and agreed that it should be made available to the Commission at its next session, for information. The Bureau noted that the Commission may wish to identify areas for urgent collaboration as well as additional areas for longer-term cooperation to be included as a follow-up to this joint work plan.

⁵ CGRFA-11 Bureau 1/08/Report para.12.

⁶ UNEP/CBD/COP/9/3, page 30.

⁷ Decision IX/1 of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity: COPIX/1, Para. 37.

⁸ CGRFA-12/09/Inf. 8.

IV. FURTHER COLLABORATION IN KEY AREAS

14. Further implementation of the joint work plan and the elaboration of its second phase will benefit from decisions taken by the Commission at its Twelfth Regular Session, as well as the outcomes from the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the CBD, in 2010.

15. In this context, the Bureau noted that access and benefit-sharing is not an area of focus in this phase of the joint work plan. The Bureau also noted that the Commission may wish to provide guidance to the Secretariat regarding mid-term cooperation with the CBD Secretariat as a follow-up to this joint work plan, and to include access and benefit-sharing in the next phase of the joint work plan.

16. The Commission may also select the issue of “targets and indicators” as another area for possible future collaboration. The Inter-governmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture already noted that the next Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will address a number of matters related to targets and indicators for biodiversity for food and agriculture.⁹ The Working Group recommended that the Commission request its Secretariat to collaborate closely with the Secretariats of the Convention and the International Treaty on these matters.

17. FAO and its Commission are already active in the area of targets and indicators, and the Commission has included this cross-sectorial matter in its Multi-Year Programme of Work. The Commission has requested FAO to develop potential criteria and indicators to assist in assessing progress in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*.¹⁰ It has also developed indicators and a reporting format for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resource for Food and Agriculture*. The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, at its Fourth Session, noted that these may need to be revised, once the Commission has updated the *Global Plan of Action*.

18. At a technical level, FAO is a partner in the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, which is a global initiative to track progress towards achieving the "2010 biodiversity target" to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. In this context, FAO is responsible for leading the development and delivery of several indicators, including on areas such as trends in genetic diversity (plant and animal genetic resources), agricultural ecosystems under sustainable management and the nutritional status of biodiversity.

19. Collaboration in the development and use of indicators is needed to ensure effective and practical approaches to monitor and report on the status and trends of biodiversity, in particular, agricultural biodiversity. Targets and indicators are already an area of focus for the cooperation between the Secretariats of the CBD and of FAO and its Commission, through the joint work plan. Given its work and interest in the development of biodiversity indicators, the Commission may wish in addition to express its willingness to take a lead role in the development and use of biodiversity targets and indicators related to the work of the Commission.

⁹ The review of the CBD's Strategic Plan and of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation and discussion on a post 2010 biodiversity target at the Tenth Conference of Parties to the CBD will be of particular relevance.

¹⁰ CGRFA-11/07/Report, para 23.

V. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

20. The Commission may wish to:
- (i) Welcome the joint work plan contained in the document, *Joint work plan of the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*,¹¹ as a basis for strengthening collaboration between the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
 - (ii) Request its Secretary to explore with the Executive Secretary of the CBD, the possibility of holding a joint meeting of the Bureau of the Commission and the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD to discuss future cooperation, and consider the further elaboration of the joint work plan;
 - (iii) Request its Secretariat to include access and benefit-sharing as a focus area in the next phase of the joint work plan.
 - (iv) Note that the next Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will address a number of matters related to targets and indicators for biodiversity for food and agriculture, and express its willingness to take a lead role in the development and use of biodiversity targets and indicators related to the work of the Commission; and
 - (v) Identify other areas for immediate and longer-term collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

¹¹ CGRFA-12/09/Inf. 8.