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INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission), at its Fourteenth Regular Session in April 2013, considered draft strategic priorities for action on forest genetic resources and agreed on them as the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (Global Plan of Action)¹. Subsequently, the FAO Conference adopted the Global Plan of Action at its Thirty-eighth Session in June 2013². At its Fifteenth Regular Session in January 2015, the Commission agreed on *the Strategy for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (the Strategy)³.

2. This document summarizes the activities undertaken by FAO in collaboration with its partners as a follow-up to the Global Plan of Action since the Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (the Working Group) in May 2016. These activities include, in particular, the preparation of the Preliminary First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and the development of draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources and a draft funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

a. Monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

3. At its Sixteenth Regular Session, the Commission adopted targets, indicators and verifiers for forest genetic resources to be used as assessment tools for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, as well as a monitoring schedule⁴. It requested FAO to prepare draft guidelines for the preparation of country progress reports and reporting guidelines for regional networks and international organizations. It further requested FAO to avoid duplications with existing reporting obligations for plant genetic resources under WIEWS⁵. The Commission also encouraged countries to prepare themselves for the collection of data and information, as appropriate, to facilitate timely submission of their first progress reports⁶.

4. In the beginning of 2017, FAO prepared draft reporting guidelines, including a questionnaire and a glossary of technical terms, for the submission of country progress reports, taking into account the reporting obligations for WIEWS. As requested by the Commission⁷, FAO consulted in March 2017 the Working Group and the National Focal Points on forest genetic resources (NFPs), by electronic means, on the draft reporting guidelines and received comments from 11 countries⁸. FAO also presented the reporting guidelines as well as the reporting process during regional workshops and other meetings organized in the context of the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 21 March 2017), the European Information System on Forest Genetic Resources (Rome, Italy, 5 April 2017), the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (Amsterdam, Netherlands, 30 May-2 June 2017) and the Forest Genetic Resources Working Group of the North American Forestry Commission (Provo, USA, 23-27 October 2017).

¹ CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 52.

² C 2013/REP, paragraph 77.

³ CGRFA-15/15/Report, Appendix E.

⁴ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 74.

⁵ World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, <http://www.fao.org/wiews/en/>

⁶ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 75.

⁷ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 75.

⁸ Australia, Brazil, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Morocco, Norway, Sweden, United States of America

5. Through Circular State Letter C/CBD-7 of 22 May 2017 (CSL)⁹, FAO invited Members to submit their country progress reports on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action by 31 December 2017. Countries could report through a dedicated online reporting system by completing the questionnaire made available online on the Open Foris platform. To facilitate the answering of species-specific questions, the list of species countries had reported earlier for *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* was revised to reflect recent changes in taxonomy and to exclude minor shrub species that may be considered only marginally as “forest genetic resources”. The updated list, including approximately 6,600 species, was incorporated into the online reporting system.

6. In November 2017, a total of 90 NFPs were provided with a username and a password for accessing the online reporting system. The NFPs could change the password after they had logged into the reporting system for the first time, and they had access only to the reporting template of their own country. During the reporting process, the Secretariat provided, at request, technical support to the NFPs on using the online reporting system. The NFPs could also add species to the list of species in the reporting template by informing the Secretariat.

7. The filled online questionnaire was considered as the country progress report. As of April 2018, a total of 38 countries had submitted their progress reports (Armenia, Australia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United States of America and Vanuatu). Four other countries (Brazil, China, Niger and Turkey) were still in the process of completing the questionnaire. The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme had also submitted its progress report.

8. Based on the data and information submitted, the document *Preliminary First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (CGRFA/WG-FGR-5/18/Inf.3)* provides detailed information on the progress made by the reporting countries in implementing the Global Plan of Action and reflects the contributions of regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations.

9. The Preliminary First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action indicates that most reporting countries have a national inventory of forest genetic resources (27 out of 38 countries) as well as national *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation programmes or systems (33 and 29 countries, respectively) in place. Similarly, most of the countries have a national tree seed programme (28 out of 38 countries). Concerning the extent of national coordination mechanisms and national strategies for forest genetic resources, 15 and 17 countries, respectively, reported of not having them. For the questions related to the state of conservation, use and development of forest genetic resources, an average of 47 tree and other woody species per country were reported in the progress reports.

b. Voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources

10. At its last session, the Commission requested FAO to prepare draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources in line with the proposed outline¹⁰ and taking into account existing guidelines for the preparation of national forest programmes and for the formulation of forest policy to avoid duplication of work¹¹. In preparing the draft guidelines, FAO also considered the guidance provided by the Working Group at its last session.

11. The document *Draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources (CGRFA/WG-FGR-5/18/Inf.4)* presents the draft guidelines for review by the Working Group. The draft guidelines aim to support countries in implementing the Global Plan of Action and to

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/nr/documents/CGRFA/News/bt555e.pdf>

¹⁰ CGRFA-16/17/19, Appendix A.

¹¹ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 73.

promote the integration of forest genetic resources into other relevant national instruments and strategies. A national strategy for forest genetic resources (national FGR strategy) is a roadmap and an action plan for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources at the national (or sub-national) level. It should be based on the national status of forest genetic resources and their current level of management, and define targets for the conservation, sustainable use and development of these resources. The national FGR strategy and its implementation should be considered as a continuous process, including monitoring of progress against the targets and revision of the strategy (e.g. every 10 years), as needed. In addition to the targets, the national FGR strategy should identify priorities for improving the management of forest genetic resources and related actions, as well as clarify responsibilities and mobilize resources for its implementation. The draft guidelines explain steps that may be followed while preparing the national FGR strategy and options for integrating the national FGR strategy with other relevant national strategies.

c. Funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

12. At its last session, the Commission considered progress made in developing the funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action¹². It requested FAO to continue pursuing extra-budgetary funds, developing the funding strategy to assist countries in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and encouraging donors to provide support¹³.

13. FAO has continued to explore the interest of different donors to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action but so far no extra-budgetary funds have been mobilized specifically for this purpose. However, FAO supported the development of several projects for extra-budgetary funds that, while addressing broader topics, are expected to contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Ongoing or forthcoming projects, including in the Central African Republic, Fiji, Haiti, Mozambique, Pakistan, Philippines, São Tomé e Príncipe, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan¹⁴ aim at enhancing sustainable forest management or supporting forest and landscape restoration with the funding support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Furthermore, FAO is currently supporting Burkina Faso, Chad, Congo, Senegal and Sudan in developing project proposals for the Green Climate Fund to enhance the contributions of forest and other land use sectors to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

14. The implementation of the Global Plan of Action is being supported by several ongoing FAO projects and programmes. With funds from Norway, FAO supports the establishment of a national forest tree seed center in Lebanon¹⁵. Through its Technical Collaboration Programme, FAO strengthens the capacity of the Forest Research Institute in Myanmar and the agricultural sectors

¹² CGRFA-16/17/19, paragraphs 18-20.

¹³ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 73.

¹⁴ Forest and Landscape Restoration supporting Landscape and Livelihoods Resilience in the Central African Republic (GCP/CAF/002/GFF, 2018-2022); Community-based Integrated Natural Resource Management in Fiji (GCP/FIJ/008/GFF, 2018-2019); Sustainable Management of Wooded Production Landscapes for Biodiversity Conservation in Haiti (GCP/HAI/036/GFF, 2019-2023); Payment for Ecosystem Services to Support Forest Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods in Mozambique (GCP/MOZ/117/GFF, 2017-2022); Reversing Deforestation and Degradation in High Conservation Value Chilgoza Pine Forests in Pakistan (GCP/PAK/091/GFF, 2018-2021); Enhancing Biodiversity, Ecosystem Flows, Carbon Stocks through Sustainable Forest Management and Restoration of Degraded Forestlands in the Philippines (GCP/PHI/065/GFF, 2018-2022); Landscape Restoration for Ecosystem Functionality and Climate Change Mitigation in the Republic of São Tomé e Príncipe (GCP/STP/022/GFF, 2018-2023); Promoting Sustainable Forest Management and Improving Livelihoods through Integrated Land Use Planning and Forest Landscape Restoration in Sri Lanka (GCP/SRL/074/GFF, 2018-2022); Sustainable Management of Forests in Mountain and Valley Areas in Uzbekistan (GCP/UZB/004/GFF, 2018-2023).

¹⁵ The establishment of a National Forest Seeds Center in Lebanon (GCP/LEB/026/NOR, 2016-2018).

contributions to the National Biodiversity Action Plan in India¹⁶. Under the framework of the Action Against Desertification (AAD) initiative¹⁷, FAO and its partners have reinforced national tree seed systems in Burkina Faso, Kenya Mali and Niger. In November 2017, FAO and its AAD partners also organized a regional workshop in Niamey, Niger to assess and plan for large-scale restoration efforts across 12 countries of Africa's Great Green Wall programme. Furthermore, the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism¹⁸ has continued to support restoration of degraded lands in Cambodia, Lebanon, Guatemala, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda and Uganda, and these efforts are increasingly exploring ways to enhance the production of forest reproductive material to meet the ambitious tree planting targets.

15. FAO continued developing the funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action by analysing lessons learnt from existing funding strategies for the implementation of the Global Plans of Action on animal and plant genetic resources. In this context, FAO considered the recent developments in the global framework on forests, such the adoption of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 by the UN General Assembly in 2017, and the main existing financing instruments for forests.

16. The draft funding strategy is presented in the document *Draft funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (CGRFA/WG-FGR-5/18/Inf.5)* for review by the Working Group. The document also presents some lessons learnt from the implementation of existing funding strategies that support the conservation, sustainable use and development of animal and plant genetic resources, and provides background information on the recent developments in the global framework on forests.

17. The following approach is proposed for mobilizing financial resources for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

- i) Firstly, for both technical and financial reasons, the proposal is to mainstream actions on the conservation and use of forest genetic resources into larger and more holistic actions that are developed for enhancing the implementation of sustainable forest management and for mitigating climate change with forest-based measures. This approach is in line with the Cancun Declaration of the 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference that urges Parties to strengthen their efforts to mainstream conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within and across various sectors, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, and tourism at all levels and scales.
- ii) Secondly, in parallel with the mainstreaming efforts, it is proposed to mobilize financial resources for strategic actions on forest genetic resources, including capacity-building, development of national strategies and strengthening of national tree seed systems. The strategic actions should be in line with the Global Plan of Action and tailored to meet specific needs and conditions of different countries and regions.
- iii) Thirdly, it is proposed to cooperate with relevant ongoing forest financing initiatives to *inter alia* emphasize the importance of investing in forest genetic resources, and create awareness on the fundamental role of these resources in sustainable forest management. Such cooperation should include the sharing of information on possible funding sources without duplicating efforts. As part of the implementation strategy of the Global Plan of Action, the Commission requested FAO to collect, maintain and regularly update on its website information on donor mandates, policies, eligibility criteria and procedures for

¹⁶ Strengthening Capacity of Forest Research Institute, Myanmar (TCP/MYA/3607, 2017-2019); Strengthening Agriculture and Allied Sector Contributions to India's National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) 2008 and the National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs) (TCP/IND/3604, 2017-2019)

¹⁷ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/en/>

¹⁸ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/en/>

submitting proposals for projects on forest genetic resources¹⁹. As the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) has already established the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) for a similar purpose to support the implementation of sustainable forest management, FAO could collaborate with the GFFFN to make available information on funding opportunities for forest genetic resources and thereby avoid duplication of efforts. In addition to making information available on funding sources, the GFFFN is also promoting the development of national forest financing strategies and facilitating access to existing and emerging funding sources.

d. Regional collaboration and networks

18. At its last session, the Commission requested FAO to continue coordinating and supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action in collaboration with regional networks on forest genetic resources.²⁰ FAO has continued its collaboration with these networks, and also plans to strengthen their role in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, subject to the availability of financial resources.

19. In April 2016, Bioversity International and FAO organized a regional workshop for the national coordinators of the Sub-Saharan Africa Forest Genetic Resources Programme (SAFORGEN) in Douala, Cameroon. The workshop participants identified a total of nine regional priorities for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action in Sub-Saharan Africa, clustered under the following three broader topics, 1) tree breeding and seed systems, 2) characterization of forest genetic resources and data systems, and 3) *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation. In June 2016, a draft regional strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action in Sub-Saharan Africa was finalized based on the workshop discussions²¹.

20. FAO contributed to the regional workshop organized by the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry research Institutions (APAFRI) and Bioversity International for the national coordinators and other experts of the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in March 2017. Workshop participants revised the regional implementation strategy for the Global Plan of Action and drafted a new one for 2018-2022. The revised strategy was presented to the Twenty-seventh Session of the FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in October 2017²². The Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission welcomed the development of the regional strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, and recommended that FAO continue its collaboration with APFORGEN and other relevant initiatives on forest genetic resources in the region²³.

21. FAO also continued its collaboration with the regional networks in Europe and North America. The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN)²⁴ incorporated relevant regional priorities of the Global Plan of Action into its current work. FAO also provided inputs to the annual meeting of the Forest Genetic Resources Working Group of the North American Forestry Commission²⁵ held in Provo, USA in October 2017. The North American Working Group decided to identify those strategic priorities of the Global Plan of Action that are relevant for the region and work towards a regional contribution to its implementation.

¹⁹ CGRFA-15/15/Report, *Appendix E, IV*.

²⁰ CGRFA-16/17/Report, paragraph 73.

²¹ <https://www.bioversityinternational.org/research-portfolio/forests/saforgen/>

²² FO:APFC/2017/10.

²³ FO:APFC/2017/REP.

²⁴ <http://www.euforgen.org>

²⁵ <https://www.fs.fed.us/global/nafc/genetics/aboutus.htm>

e. Awareness raising and information sharing

22. FAO continued its efforts to increase international awareness of the Global Plan of Action as well as the importance of forest genetic resources. In September 2016, FAO presented the Global Plan of Action and related activities at the final conference of the EU COST Action on “Strengthening the conservation of marginal and peripheral tree populations”²⁶ that was held in Arezzo, Italy. The conference shared lessons learnt in identifying, monitoring and managing these tree populations not only in Europe but also in North Africa and Lebanon. A similar update on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action was also provided to the first annual meeting of the European Commission-funded GENTREE project²⁷ that was held in Madrid, Spain in March 2017.

23. FAO promoted the results of the Commission’s work, including the Global Plans of Action on animal, forest and plant genetic resources, in a brochure²⁸ released at the 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference held in Cancun, Mexico. In Decision XIII/3, the Thirteenth Session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) took note of the Global Plans of Action and welcomed the proposal by FAO to act as a platform on biodiversity and agricultural sectors for governments, communities of practice and other stakeholders to build bridges between sectors, identify synergies, align goals and develop integrated cross-sectoral approaches to mainstreaming biodiversity in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors.

24. FAO organized regional meetings on agricultural biotechnologies in Asia-Pacific (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)²⁹ and in Sub-Saharan Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)³⁰ in September and November 2017, respectively. During these regional meetings, the application of biotechnology in the forest sector for the conservation and use of forest genetic resources was also presented and discussed. For the meeting in Asia-Pacific, FAO produced a video on the use of tissue culture in propagating tree planting stock in Thailand³¹.

25. In September 2017, FAO provided contributions to the organization of a session on forest genetic resource at the 125th Anniversary Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), held in Freiburg, Germany. Furthermore, FAO presented an update on monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to the Annual Meeting of the OECD Scheme on Forest Seed and Plant, held in Copenhagen, Denmark in October 2017. A total of 27 countries, including several non-OECD members (Burkina Faso, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda and Uganda), are currently participating in the Scheme.

26. As an additional contribution to information sharing, FAO launched the Second Edition of the Climate-smart Agriculture Sourcebook³² in November 2017. It includes a chapter on the management of forest genetic resources as part of the module on genetic resources for food and agriculture. Furthermore, the four thematic studies prepared in conjunction with The State of the World’s Forest Genetic Resources will be released in spring 2018³³.

²⁶ <http://map-fgr.entecra.it/>

²⁷ <http://www.gentree-h2020.eu/>

²⁸ Sustainable agriculture for biodiversity – Biodiversity for sustainable agriculture, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6602e.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/events/detail-events/en/c/1440/>

³⁰ <http://www.fao.org/africa/events/detail-events/en/c/1035227/>

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyacPtO6cs0&feature=youtu.be>

³² <http://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture-sourcebook/en/>

³³ <http://www.fao.org/forestry/fgr/71306/en/>

III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

27. The Working Group may wish to take note of the activities reported and provide guidance to the Commission on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Furthermore, the Working Group may wish to:

- i) take note of the Preliminary First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action;
- ii) recommend that countries, regional networks and relevant international organizations which have not yet submitted their progress reports, are invited to do so by 30 June 2018 at the latest;
- iii) recommend that an updated First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action be presented to the next session of the Commission, for its consideration;
- iv) review and revise, as appropriate, the draft Voluntary Guidelines for Preparing a National Strategy for Forest Genetic Resources, and request the Secretariat to consolidate them, taking into account comments received from National Focal Points, regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations by 31 July 2018, for consideration by the Commission at its next session; and
- v) review and revise, as appropriate, the draft Funding Strategy for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action, for consideration by the Commission at its next session.

28. The Working Group may wish to recommend that the Commission:

- i) invite countries to continue implementing the Global Plan of Action, and encourage them to address the findings of the First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action, as appropriate;
- ii) request FAO to continue coordinating and supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, in collaboration with regional networks and relevant international organizations; and
- iii) encourage donors to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and its funding strategy.