



The International Treaty

ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



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NOTIFICATION

Information about the DivSeek Initiative

Dear Madam/Sir,

This is to inform you about a new initiative of relevance to the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Article 17 of the Treaty).

As you may already be aware of, the Governing Body at its Fifth Session, by Resolution 10/2013, established a Consultation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Through an official notification, I have invited stakeholders to make available any information relevant to the topics of the consultation.¹

In the same Resolution, the Governing Body has requested me to continue strengthening collaboration with all stakeholders to facilitate their contribution to the continuous development of the Global Information System.

It is in this context that I am pleased to inform you about *DivSeek*, an initiative which, with the support of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, is grouping relevant experts of the global plant community around the universal need to develop standardized data formats, associated repositories, and analysis tools that could link large-scale sequencing and phenotyping data to publicly available germplasm accessions, including those that are part of the Multilateral System. A white paper that describes the scope and objectives of *DivSeek*, is available on the website of the International Treaty.²

Following the positive appraisal of *DivSeek* by the Bureau of the Sixth Session of the Governing Body and the instructions received, I have attended a meeting of the *DivSeek* community where stakeholders made the request for continuous support through a facilitation unit, while the community develops a permanent governance structure. Thanks to generous donors' support, the Global Crop Diversity Trust hosts and implements the facilitation unit jointly with the Secretariat of the International Treaty, and operates it on a day to day basis with additional inputs provided by the Global Plant Council and other experts and organizations.

In the process of development of a permanent governance structure for *DivSeek*, it is my intention to continue facilitating linkages with the process of Article 17, with a view to promoting greater access to relevant information systems by Contracting Parties and other relevant stakeholders.

To that effect, I will soon circulate a series of surveys to gather information and views on the development of the Global Information System. One of those surveys will be dedicated to genomics information and it is expected that the gathered information will be considered within the *DivSeek* initiative in order to harmonize with the Treaty objectives, as contained in Article 17, and on-going process.

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¹ The notification is available at:

http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/013_GB6_NCP_COGISinputs1_en.pdf

² The White Paper is available at: [www](http://www.planttreaty.org)



Another point of relevance of *DivSeek* to the Treaty, is in relation to the current Call for Proposals of the Benefit-Sharing Fund, and in particular on Window 3 of the Call, on the co-development and transfer of technology,³ that has been designed with the understanding that information exchange and technology transfer are increasingly connected. As the Window aims to promote international cooperation, a typical project would support a lead institution in a developing Contracting Party to partner with institutions or consortium, such as *DivSeek* facilitates the integration of repositories of genomic, phenomic and germplasm data in order to transfer and co-develop technologies enabling the use of such data and relevant technologies to the developing world.

I will continue communicating relevant developments concerning *DivSeek* from time to time. I am at your service to answer any question you may have regarding the above, and look forward to your active contributions to the development of the Global Information System.

Please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration.



Dr Shakeel Bhatti
Secretary
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources
for Food and Agriculture

³ The notification is available at:

ftp://ftp.fao.org/ag/agp/planttreaty/funding/call2014/cfp_3_2014_0_en.pdf