



Celebration of the “10th Anniversary of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture”

FAO, Rome 14 November 2011

Statement by FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf at the Opening

Your Excellency the Chairman of the Treaty

Honorable Guests,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to celebrate with you today the 10th Anniversary of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, an important mechanism which has played and will continue to play an important role in enhancing agricultural development and food security worldwide.

The conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are key to ensuring that the world will produce enough food to feed its growing population in the future. As you know, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was established in 1983.

Another major step was taken in 1996 with the adoption of the Global Plan of Action at the Leipzig International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources. All this work culminated in 2001 with the historic adoption, by the 31st FAO Conference, of the legally binding International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which entered into force on 29 June 2004.

The Treaty's Multilateral System is a global gene-pool of more than 1.5 million samples of plant genetic material, that Contracting Parties of the Treaty govern collectively and multilaterally. This gene-pool constitutes the basis of more than 80% of the world's food derived from plants and it is possibly our most important tool for adapting agriculture to climate change in years to come.

The ratification of the Treaty by 127 Contracting Parties implies that many governments have now recognized the importance of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

Through the Treaty's Governing Body, the international community has also created a new multilateral mechanism for equitable distribution of benefits, the Benefit-sharing Fund. The Fund is currently investing directly in high impact projects that are supporting farmers in developing countries to conserve crop diversity in their fields and are assisting farmers and breeders globally to adapt their crops to our changing needs and demands.

After 10 years from the entry into force of the Treaty, the time has come to take stock and I am honoured to celebrate with you today the 10th Anniversary of this important Treaty.

FAO has been a key player in the processes leading to the adoption and the implementation of the Treaty and will continue to support its activities including operational and technical programmes but also policies. In July this year, FAO members endorsed the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as an agreed policy framework to provide new impetus to saving and using plant diversity for food security and sustainable agro-biodiversity.

Dear colleagues and friends

Distinguished Representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The achievements of the treaty would not have been possible without the support and commitment of its parties and the dedicated work of its Secretariat. Now, more than ever, you need to consolidate these gains by urging all the Contracting Parties to meet their financial and technical commitments under the Treaty.

I thank you for your kind attention.