

**REPORT OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE  
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES**

**Leipzig, Germany, 17 - 23 June 1996**

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## **REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES**

### **OPENING OF CONFERENCE**

1. Mr Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, welcomed all delegates to the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources and declared the Conference open. The Conference was attended by 150 national delegations as well as a number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. A list of participants is attached as Appendix C.

2. His Excellency Jochen Borchert, Federal Minister for Food, Agriculture and Forestry of Germany, delivered a welcoming speech on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. The decision to host the Conference underlined the importance Germany attached to the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources. The Minister noted that the great number of crop plants and varieties were the result of extraordinary cultural achievements by humanity over past millennia and emphasized that there were now many warning signs which pointed to the loss of this diversity of plant genetic resources, which represented a tangible danger to the livelihoods of all. He stressed that the sustainable management of plant genetic resources conservation and utilization was essential to secure and increase food supply while conserving that biological diversity which sustains food supply.

3. Mr Borchert emphasized that these goals would only be achieved through the participation of stakeholders from a wide variety of fields and that there was an urgent need to increase public awareness of the importance of plant genetic resources to agriculture and food security. He emphasized that the Global Plan of Action contained a wealth of possible and necessary measures which served these goals and that the main task facing the Conference would be to achieve consensus on the Global Plan of Action, the adoption of which would be a milestone in the development of the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources.

4. In his address to the Conference, the Minister for Agriculture and Food of the Free State of Saxony, His Excellency Rolf Jähnichen, noted the important role of plant genetic resources in the maintenance of cultural heritage, and expressed the hope that the Conference would endorse a series of recommendations for concrete action for the conservation and use of plant genetic resources. The Lord Mayor of Leipzig, Mr Lehmann-Grube, then welcomed delegates to the Conference, and noted the symbolic importance of the Conference being held in the historic city of Leipzig, which had recently undergone major political changes.

5. The Director-General of FAO, Mr Jacques Diouf, then delivered a keynote address. He stated that the Conference was a unique and historic event for the international community and represented a major turning point in international efforts for the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources. Mr Diouf recalled the decades of work by outstanding scientists and by farmers and local communities, and the achievements of both countries and public or private institutions. He also acknowledged the contributions many multilateral and bilateral agencies had made to international, regional and national programmes for the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. He noted, however, that national capacities and international cooperation

needed further strengthening so that all nations might equitably and rationally share the burdens and benefits of the conservation and use of plant genetic resources.

6. Mr Diouf reminded the Conference of the broader and urgent challenges facing food and agriculture, and emphasized the pressing need for major scientific and technological breakthroughs, on a scale similar to those of the Green Revolution. This would require political will, at the highest level, in order to ensure global food security. For this reason, the outcome of the Conference, including the Leipzig Declaration, would be presented to the World Food Summit, in order to stress the importance of agrobiodiversity for global food security.

#### **ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS**

7. Mr Franz-Josef Feiter (Germany) was elected to the Chair of the Conference. Mr Adel Mahmoud Aboul-Naga (Egypt), Mr Thomas Forbord (USA), Mr Abdul Jamil Mohd. Ali (Malaysia), Mr Fernando Gerbasi (Venezuela), Ms Kristiane Elfriede Herrmann (Australia) and Mr Djibril Sene (Senegal) were elected as Vice-Chairs of the Conference. Mr R.B. Singh (India) was elected Rapporteur.

8. The Chair, in accepting, thanked countries, national and international institutions, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the FAO Secretariat for their contribution to the preparatory process for the Conference. He noted the role of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and paid tribute to its Chair, Mr José Miguel Bolivar. He asked the support of delegates in seeking viable and forward-looking solutions, in the spirit of flexibility, commitment and the willingness to compromise that had characterized the preparatory process leading to the Conference.

9. The President of the Second Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, His Excellency Sarwono Kusumaatmadja, Minister for the Environment of Indonesia, delivered a statement from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to the Conference (Appendix B). The Conference of the Parties had considered the preparatory process for the International Technical Conference, which had been based on national reports and regional and subregional meetings, as exemplary and innovative. He conveyed the Conference of the Parties' request that FAO present the outcome of the International Technical Conference, including the Global Plan of Action, and the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, to the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which would be held in November 1996. He also welcomed FAO's offer to link its information systems to the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

#### **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

10. The Conference adopted the Agenda (Appendix A). The Conference organized its work through a Plenary Session, and two open-ended Working Groups: one, chaired by Mr Gerbasi (Venezuela), to examine the draft Global Plan of Action, the other, chaired by Mr Forbord (USA), to examine the draft of the Leipzig Declaration. The Conference also established a Contact Group under the Chair to review possibilities for the implementation and financing of the Global Plan of Action.

## **THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FAO GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES, AND THE PREPARATORY PROCESS**

11. This item was presented by the Secretary of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. FAO's activities in this field had begun in the 1950s and included three previous International Technical Conferences, held in 1967, 1973 and 1981. The FAO Conference had established the Commission in 1983 and the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources had been adopted that same year. The Commission had since developed a Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The 1991 FAO Conference and the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, through "Agenda 21," had called for the development of a periodic report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and a rolling Global Plan of Action, through the Fourth International Technical Conference. These documents, which had been prepared through a participatory, country-driven process, under the guidance of the Commission, would be integral components of the Global System. They would allow countries to monitor activities for the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources, determine priorities, and oversee programmes in this area through the Commission. The Secretary of the Commission noted the cooperation extended by many organizations, in particular the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, as well as the support by the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity for the development of the System.

## **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REVISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES**

12. The FAO Legal Counsel presented a progress report on the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources. Two major rounds of negotiation had already been held: the first Extraordinary Session (November 1994) and the Sixth Session (June 1995) of the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources. The next round of negotiations was scheduled for early December 1996 during the Third Extraordinary Session. The Commission had recognized that the outcome of the International Technical Conference would assist it in arriving at understandings which would help in the process of negotiating the revision of the International Undertaking. The Second Conference of the Parties had also expressed its support for the process, on-going in the FAO Commission, for the revision of the International Undertaking, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity. As the result of the above-mentioned negotiations, a negotiating text had been prepared. The Commission, at its last session, had agreed that its Working Group would meet with the full participation of members of the Commission that are not members of the Working Group as observers before its Third Session to prepare a simplified text to facilitate negotiation.

## **REVIEW OF THE REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

13. The Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its associated background documents were introduced by the Secretariat. The Report described the state of the resources themselves, assessed the state of capacity for the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture at national, regional and international levels, and identified gaps and constraints.

It also provided a review of the state of the art of techniques and methodologies required and identified information deficiencies that should be addressed in the future. The Conference welcomed the Report as the first comprehensive worldwide assessment of the state of plant genetic resource conservation and use.

14. The Conference noted that the Report had been prepared through a participatory, country-driven process involving 157 countries, as well as over 50 non-governmental organizations, including private sector associations, and numerous individual specialists. The primary source of information for the Report had been the Country Reports. A number of subregional synthesis reports were finalized at the 11 subregional and regional preparatory meetings. Additionally, extensive use was made of data from the World Information and Early Warning System, held by FAO. The Conference asked for the Report, and its associated background documents, to be issued as FAO information documents, which could also be made widely available through the Internet, and periodically updated.

#### **REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF THE WORLD'S PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE AND OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

15. After extensive discussions, the Conference approved the draft text and adopted it as the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Annex 2). The delegations of Argentina and Peru reserved their position on the last sentence of paragraph 15 of the Plan.

16. The Conference applauded the country-driven preparatory process, through which the Global Plan of Action had been developed. The Global Plan of Action had been based on the recommendations from Country Reports, subregional and regional preparatory meetings, and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

17. The Conference took note of the FAO Secretariat's estimate of the cost of implementing the Global Plan of Action and of its identification of existing sources of financing and of possible new sources of financing. Given the changes introduced by the Conference in many of the priority activities, it requested the Secretariat to refine its cost estimates, and to submit the results to the Third Extraordinary Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

#### ***Implementation and Financing of the Global Plan of Action***

18. The Conference recognized that the Global Plan of Action was an important element of the Global System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and could be an essential contribution to facilitating the implementation of Agenda 21 and of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

19. The follow-up processes call for action at local, national, regional and international levels and should involve all parties which were associated with the preparation of the International Technical Conference: the national governments, local and regional authorities, regional and international organizations, both inter-governmental and non-governmental, the scientific community, the private sector, local communities and farmers and other agricultural producers and their associations. The implementation of the Global Plan of Action should take place as an integral part of the Global System for the Conservation and

Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

20. In order to enlist the widest participation and support for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, the outcome of the Leipzig Conference should be reported to the major international, regional and national bodies and fora dealing with food and agriculture and biodiversity, including, in particular, the FAO Conference, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Commission on Sustainable Development of the United Nations, and the governing bodies of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank, the Common Fund for Commodities, Regional Development Banks and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, inviting their member constituencies to promote and take part as appropriate in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. It should also be reported to the World Food Summit which meets in Rome in November 1996.

21. Overall progress in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and of the related follow-up processes would be monitored and guided by the national governments and other Members of FAO, through the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. In order to discharge this function, the Commission could develop a phased programme with appropriate cost estimates, and a procedure for the review of the Global Plan. Such review should deal with the progress made at national, regional and international levels in implementation, elaboration, and adjustment as appropriate, of the Plan, thus making it a "rolling" plan as recommended in Agenda 21. A first review should be undertaken within four years.

22. To this end, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture should set the formats for receiving progress reports from all the parties concerned and establish criteria and indicators to assess progress. In the light of its findings, the conclusions of the Commission should be brought to the attention of concerned governments and international institutions to fill gaps, rectify imbalances or lack of coordination, and to consider new initiatives or activities. Those conclusions of the Commission which have major policy implications should also be brought to the attention of the FAO Council and Conference as was already the case with its predecessor body, the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, and to the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and/or to the Commission on Sustainable Development for action, endorsement or information, as appropriate.

23. The Conference recognized the need for financial resources for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and that its full implementation would involve a significant increase in the activities currently taking place. The Conference recognized that the Global Plan of Action would have to be implemented progressively, and adequate financial resources commensurate with the scope of the Global Plan of Action should therefore be mobilized. Each country should determine its own priorities in the light of those agreed in the Global Plan of Action and in the framework of its food and agriculture development needs.

24. The Conference recognized that significant, but indeterminate, funding for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture is currently provided by national governments and other domestic sources of funds, multilateral organizations and from bilateral and regional sources.

25. Recognizing the importance of the contribution of domestic sources, including both public and private sectors, the Conference strongly recommended that each country make every possible effort to provide, in accordance with its capacities, financial support and incentives with respect to its national activities which are intended to achieve the objectives of the Global Plan of Action, in accordance with its national plans, priorities and programmes.

26. The Conference reaffirmed that international cooperation for conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture should be strengthened, in particular to support and complement the efforts of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

27. The Conference reaffirmed the commitments for the new and additional funds made under Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Under those commitments, funds should be made available to finance the implementation, by developing countries and countries with economies in transition, of the Global Plan of Action. Such funding should come from developed countries and/or other sources, and should, where possible, seek to facilitate the leveraging of other funding sources and mechanisms, and assist countries to implement the Global Plan of Action. Every effort should also be made to seek new, additional and innovative sources of funding within the process of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

28. The analysis of information on activities on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture world wide and through all funding sources should be extended under the auspices of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. This work should help to utilize the funds more efficiently and assist national, multilateral, regional and bilateral organizations to develop effective programmes. It should be a continuing process of monitoring and should not be construed as a pre-condition to funding. The major multilateral and bilateral funding and development institutions should also be invited to examine ways and means of supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. In this process, close cooperation should be maintained with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

#### **ADOPTION OF THE LEIPZIG DECLARATION**

29. The Conference adopted the Leipzig Declaration (Annex 1).

#### **GENERAL STATEMENTS**

30. Several national delegations made general statements to the Conference as did a number of non-governmental organizations. On behalf of some non-governmental organizations, it was requested that FAO establish a permanent and flexible process to allow the participation, consultation and adequate representation of farmers', indigenous and local community organizations in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, the negotiation of the revised International Undertaking, and any subsequent activities.



## **CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE**

31. The Conference requested its Chair to present the Leipzig Declaration and the outcome of the International Technical Conference to the World Food Summit, and to the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its Third Meeting.

32. The FAO Assistant Director-General, Agriculture Department, Mr Abdoulaye Sawadogo, thanked the Chair and Vice-Chairs for their skills in guiding the Conference to a successful conclusion. The Leipzig Declaration, the Global Plan of Action and the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources were the result of many years preparatory work. He thanked the countries, international agricultural research centres, and international and non-governmental organizations which had contributed to their preparation.

33. The Chairman, Mr Franz-Josef Feiter, in his closing address, congratulated the participants on their achievements at the Conference. He emphasized the significance of the Report on the State of the World 's Plant Genetic Resources, the Global Plan of Action, and the Leipzig Declaration, which would inform and guide future collaboration in the field of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. He thanked the Vice-Chairs of the Conference, the participants, the Secretariat and the Conference Staff, and declared the Conference closed.

Appendix A: AGENDA

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1. Opening of the Conference
2. Election of the Officers
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work
4. The Fourth International Technical Conference in the context of the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources, and the preparatory process
5. Progress Report on the Revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources
6. Review of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources
7. Review of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
8. Adoption of the Global Plan of Action and the recommendations for its implementation
9. Review of possibilities for the implementation and financing of the Global Plan of Action
10. Adoption of the Leipzig Declaration
11. Adoption of the Report of the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources
12. Closing of the Conference

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**Appendix B**

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**STATEMENT FROM THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO  
THE CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY TO THE INTERNATIONAL  
TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONSERVATION  
AND UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES  
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

1. The planet's essential goods and services depend on the variety and variability of genes, species, populations and ecosystems. If humanity is to have a future on this Earth, biological diversity must be conserved so that these functions and services are maintained. The current decline in biodiversity is largely the result of human activity and represents a serious threat to human development. Despite efforts to conserve the world's biological diversity, its depletion has continued. The entry into force of the Convention provides an international framework through which to address this depletion which causes threats to ecosystems that are vital for the sustenance of human societies in all countries. By becoming Parties to the Convention, Governments have committed themselves to the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

2. The Convention on Biological Diversity advances the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources, while recognizing the important role of other conventions to the objectives of the Convention.

3. The Conference of the Parties guides the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, reviews the further development of matters relating to the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and, where appropriate, brings these within the purview of the Convention.

4. Within the overarching framework established by the Convention on Biological Diversity, it is the case that there are many international forums through which the objectives of the Convention can be progressed. The Conference of the Parties urges all such forums to work together to achieve these objectives.

5. In this regard, the Conference of the Parties recognizes the substantial contribution that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations can make, applying its experience and skills to tackle the very important issues associated with genetic resources for food and agriculture.

6. It is important for us to recognize that there are very many Parties to the Convention that are also members of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. This forms a strong basis of common ground from which the Convention and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations could build complementary programmes in the area of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

7. At its second meeting, held in Jakarta from 6 to 17 November 1995, the Conference of the Parties considered advice provided by its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice on the contribution of the Convention to the preparation for the forthcoming International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

8. As a result of these considerations, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity wishes to draw to the attention of the fourth International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture the following considerations:

- (a) The comprehensive nature and the multidisciplinary character of the Convention on Biological Diversity, aimed at addressing all facets of biological diversity within its threefold objectives: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of its benefits;
- (b) The importance attached by the Conference of the Parties to the conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and their use in a sustainable manner;
- (c) The recognition that plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are critical components of biological diversity;
- (d) In recognition of the need to assess the current situation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and identify gaps and needs for priority action, the Conference of the Parties welcomes the preparation of the Global Plan of Action and the State of the World's Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;

- (e) The need to strengthen capacity-building, in particular in developing countries;
- (f) The relevance of the issues to be considered by the fourth International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (g) The Conference of the Parties' support for the recognition by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations of the need to make the processes of the fourth International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Convention on Biological Diversity mutually supportive and complementary, in harmony with the provisions of the Convention.
- (h) The sovereign rights of States over their natural resources.

9. Recalling the recommendations of Agenda 21, chapter 14(g) and of Resolution 3 of the Nairobi Final Act, the Conference of the Parties urges the International Technical Conference to make every effort to promote complementarity and consistency between the outcome of the Conference and the provisions of the Convention, making them mutually supportive and enhancing the success of both.

10. The Conference of the Parties compliments the Secretariat of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations responsible for the programme and processes for the fourth International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture on its exemplary preparatory process based upon national reports, regional and subregional meetings leading to a global assessment of biological diversity of unique ecosystems. The process provides an innovative model.

11. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity hopes that this statement will be helpful to the International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and plans to consider, at its third meeting, the outcome of the Conference.

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DELEGATIONS NATIONALES  
DELEGACIONES NACIONALES**

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