

April 2021



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



The International Treaty
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

FOURTH MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

20–21 April 2021

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

1. The Scientific Advisory Committee on the Global Information System was established by the Governing Body at its Sixth Session by Resolution 3/2015, through which it also set out the mandate of the Committee. By Resolution 4/2019, *Implementation of the Global Information System*,¹ the Governing Body:

- a. Decided to reconvene the Scientific Advisory Committee with the same composition and terms of reference of the previous biennium, subject to the availability of financial resources, and requested the Secretary to continue updating the Committee on progress with the GLIS Vision and the Programme of Work on GLIS (paragraph 12);
- b. Invited the Scientific Advisory Committee to review, as may be required, the Programme of Work on GLIS for the consideration of the Governing Body at its Ninth Session (paragraph 13);
- c. Requested the Scientific Advisory Committee to continue considering scientific and technical issues of relevance to DSI/GSD, and considering national legislation, as appropriate (paragraph 14).

2. The updated terms of reference for the current biennium are attached as *Annex 1*.

3. The Secretary organized an information session in November 2020, to keep the members of the committee informed of the most relevant recent developments and subsequently, invited the experts to submit inputs for the review and update of the Programme of Work.

4. However, due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent national and international measures entailing restrictions to travel and gatherings, a physical meeting of the Committee is not possible in 2021, as planned, and is not foreseeable in the near future.

5. The documentation for this meeting is available at <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/1259559/>.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

6. The fourth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee will be held virtually on 20 and 21 April 2021, through two three-hour sessions. The meeting will start on Tuesday 20 April at 12.00 CEST (Rome time). Further details concerning the practical arrangements for the virtual meeting are contained in the document, IT/GB-9/SAC-GLIS-4/21/2/Inf.2, *Note for Participants*.

¹ Resolution 4/2019 <http://www.fao.org/3/nb782en/nb782en.pdf>

ITEM 1. ELECTION OF CO-CHAIRPERSONS

7. By Resolution 3/2015, the Governing Body established the Committee and indicated that “*The Committee shall elect its Co-chairpersons from among the experts*”.

8. According to its terms of reference, the Committee elects two Co-Chairpersons from among its members, and it has been customary to elect one Co-Chairperson from a developing and one from a developed country.

9. Through a communication from the Secretary, the experts of Committee nominated by the FAO Regions were invited to consider the election of the Co-chairpersons by email prior to the meeting.

ITEM 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

10. The Provisional Agenda, IT/GB-9/SAC-GLIS-4/21/2, was prepared by the Secretary under the guidance of the Co-Chair of the Committee. The substantive agenda items have corresponding working documents, in addition to information documents, where relevant.

11. Under this item, the Co-Chairs will invite the Committee to adopt the Agenda for its meeting based on the Provisional Agenda, as contained in *Annex 2*.

12. Under Item 6, several partners, projects and initiatives have been invited to provide updates relevant to the Programme of Work on the Global Information System.

ITEM 3. REPORT ON THE OPERATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK

13. The Secretariat has made available three documents for this item. The document, IT/GB-9/SAC-4/21/3, *Report on the Operations and Implementation of the Programme of Work*, contains updates on the support provided to users to make plant genetic resources more visible through the Global Information System in relation to objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the Programme of Work. This document is relevant for Agenda items 3.1 and 3.2, and contains, in the Annex, annotations to Resolution 4/2019 indicating progress in responding to the guidance provided by the Governing at its Eighth Session.

14. Under this item, the Secretariat will also illustrate the synergies and complementarities between the GLIS Portal and other global and regional databases.

3.1 Update on the Implementation of the GLIS Portal

15. Under this sub-item, the Secretariat will provide specific information on the development of the structural elements of the GLIS Portal to reflect the vision adopted by the Governing Body. In particular, it will illustrate the home page and the directory of linkages and the further development of the graph browser prototype. The Committee is invited to provide its views and advice on the further development of the Portal. Two documents have been prepared this sub-agenda item.

3.2 Development and Promotion of Digital Object Identifiers

16. Under this sub-item, the Secretariat will also provide information on the progress in the adoption of Digital Object Identifiers, latest collaboration with partners, including the latest collaboration with GRIN-Global. The Secretariat will also illustrate the progress in the integration with other scientific communities and datasets through the use of DOIs, in correspondence with section VII of the document, IT/GB-9/SAC-4/21/3.

17. Under this item, the Committee is invited to note the relevant information and updates, and provide its advice, as appropriate.

ITEM 4. PGRFA DOCUMENTATION AND DESCRIPTORS

18. At the Eighth Session, the Governing Body provided guidance on various items related to the Objective 3 of the Programme of Work on the Global Information System (GLIS). This objective focuses on the development, implementation and promotion of standards for documentation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), to facilitate interoperability among systems in the context of Article 17.

4.1 Descriptors for Crop Wild Relatives Conserved *in situ*

19. The Eighth Session of the Governing Body took note of the project entitled “*Development of a Globally Agreed List of Descriptors for in situ Crop Wild Relatives Documentation*”, funded by the Government of Germany, and encouraged the participation of experts in the consultation process.

20. Under this sub-item, the Secretariat will provide an update on the development of the descriptors resulting from the consultation undertaken through the project and published in February 2021. The Secretariat will provide an update on the second phase of the project, and inform about the regional experiences and testing that have been documented.

21. Accordingly, the Committee is invited to take note of the progress made and to provide additional advice, as appropriate.

4.2 Review and development of descriptors for specific crops

22. At its third meeting, the Committee requested the Secretary to circulate to the Committee a broader and more detailed document listing existing crop descriptors useful information that may help in the assignment of priority for their development or review. The members of the Committee reviewed the list through electronic means and provided advice for the setting of priorities.

23. The document, IT/GB-9/SAC-GLIS-4/21/4.2, contains information on the current demand from specific crop descriptors and provides an indication of the priorities for their development for the consideration of the Committee.

24. Under this sub-item, the Committee is invited to review and support candidate crops contained in the document for the development of descriptor lists, as well as provide relevant advice related to this work track that could be brought to the consideration of the Governing Body at its Ninth Session.

ITEM 5. ACCESS AND USE OF PGRFA INFORMATION THROUGH THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM AND OTHER RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS

25. The document IT/GB-9/SAC-4/21/5, *Access and Use of Plant Genetic Resources Information through the Global Information System and Other Relevant Developments*, relates to the component of the GLIS vision dealing with the promotion of transparency of rights and obligations related to accessing, sharing and using information associated with germplasm, and the establishment of ways to exercise those rights and obligations within the GLIS. The Programme of Work that accompanies the vision foresees the analysis of the institutional, organizational, policy and legal factors for PGRFA information access, sharing and use in the context of the provisions of the International Treaty, in particular Articles 12 and 13 on the Multilateral System.

26. At its Eighth Session, the Governing Body requested the Committee to continue considering scientific and technical issues of relevance to digital sequence information / genetic sequence data (DSI/GSD), and considering national legislation, as appropriate.

27. The document provides the Committee with updates on the on-going consideration of DSI/GSD in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as on ensuing

initiatives by the scientific research and technical institutions. With regard to institutional, organizational, policy and legal factors for PGRFA information access, sharing and use, the document informs the Committee on developments within FAO and in other fora, which may be of relevance to GLIS.

28. The Committee is invited to consider the information provided in the document and advise, among other issues, on preparatory work for the Ninth Session in relation to the above referred components of the vision and programme of work as well as DSI/GSD.

ITEM 6. REPORT ON PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

29. Under this agenda item, the Committee is invited to consider the document, IT/GB-9/SAC-4/21/6, *Report on Partnerships and Collaboration*, which provides a summary of key cooperation activities, as well as of recent developments in the continuing close relationship between the Secretariat and the preferential partners identified in the context of GLIS.

30. Under this item, several partners, initiative and projects have been invited to provide updates on their activities that are of relevance to the Global Information System since the last Session of the Governing Body.

31. The Committee is invited to take note of the information provided under this agenda item and provide any relevant advice.

ITEM 7. REVISION AND UPDATE OF THE GLIS PROGRAM OF WORK

32. Under this agenda item, the Committee is invited to consider the document, IT/GB-9/SAC-4/21/7, and the invitation of the Governing Body to review and update the programme of work as it may be needed.

33. The document contains the inputs and suggestions received and has been annotated to facilitate its review by the Committee.

34. The Committee is invited to:

- i. ***Provide advice*** on the review of the Programme of Work on the Global Information System, taking into account the proposal contained in the *Annex* to IT/GB-9/SAC-4/21/7.
- ii. ***Provide advice*** on any additional elements of advice or suggestions, as appropriate, for the consideration of the Governing Body at its Ninth Session.

ITEM 8. OTHER MATTERS

35. Under this agenda item, the Committee may consider any other matters of relevance for this meeting or any further work.

ITEM 9. CLOSURE

36. Due to the virtual format of the meeting and the limited time available it would not be feasible to draft, review and approval the report at the meeting. The draft report will be prepared by the Secretariat under the guidance of the Co-Chairs and sent to the members for its review adoption by electronic means.

37. The Committee may wish to set a deadline for comments following the circulation of the draft report.

38. To facilitate the consideration of the work undertaken on the Global Information System by the Governing Body, the Secretariat will develop elements for a draft resolution, for its consideration, based on the advice provided by the Committee.

*Annex 1***Terms of Reference for the Scientific Advisory Committee on Article 17²**Objectives

The Governing Body provides guidance on the development and strengthening of the Global Information System, to facilitate the exchange of information, based on existing information systems, on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).

The Scientific Advisory Committee (Committee) shall advise the Secretary on:

- general recommendations on the development and deployment of the Global Information System and its components as adopted by the Governing Body;
- the discovery of new areas of work with potential impact on the System;
- the selection of pilot activities for the Global Information System and, upon request of the Secretary, other initiatives and actions to sustain the operation of the Global Information System, and the further update of the Programme of Work.

In particular, the Committee shall provide scientific advice to the Secretary on the following items:

1. the effectiveness and efficiency of the Global Information System as a mechanism to promote advice regarding scientific, technical and environmental cooperation on PGRFA matters;
2. the exchange of PGRFA-related information and the transfer of publicly available expertise, technology and scientific cooperation;
3. scientific and technical components of the Global Information System and its Programme of Work as recommended by the Governing Body;
4. cooperation with other relevant international and regional scientific, technical and technology transfer initiatives, including the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing House Mechanism of the Nagoya Protocol;
5. means to facilitate the implementation of the Global Information System at the national level and the establishment of a Stakeholder Platform;
6. scientific, technical and environmental cooperation and benefits of all the Treaty activities, including the Multilateral System and Access and Benefit-sharing and the Programme of Work on Sustainable Use.

For the 2020-2021 biennium, The Committee is invited to review, as may be required, the Programme of Work on GLIS for the consideration of the Governing Body at its Ninth Session. The Committee is also requested to continue considering scientific and technical issues of relevance to DSI/GSD, and considering national legislation, as appropriate.

² Resolutions IT/GB-6/15/Res 3 and IT/GB-7/17/Res 5.

Composition

The Committee is composed of:

- up to 2 scientific experts from each Region, nominated by the Vice-chairpersons of the Governing Body of each respective Region;
- 10 additional scientific and technical experts appointed by the Secretary including experts suggested by the regions and relevant stakeholders, taking into account the required range of technical expertise and regional balance as appropriate.

The members shall be selected for their scientific expertise and understanding of the Global Information System and the International Treaty, taking into account the need for specialized and in-depth expertise including: bioinformatics and molecular genetics; the 'omics', in particular genomics, phenomics and proteomics; management of environmental and geo-spatial data about plant genetic resources; scientific information, taxonomy, crop wild relatives and genebank management and *ex situ*, *in situ* and on-farm conservation of PGRFA, technical cooperation; capacity-building; system integration, information exchange and data sharing; fair and equitable benefit sharing and legal expertise in the relevant international law and regulations; partnerships with other organizations, institutions and initiatives.

The Committee shall elect its Co-chairpersons from among the experts.

The Secretariat of the International Treaty will facilitate the work of the Committee and report to the Governing Body.

Annex 2

**Fourth Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on the
Global Information System – Provisional Agenda and Timetable**

TUESDAY, 20 APRIL 2021 (12:00 – 15:00 CEST)

Opening of the meeting

Item 1. Election of Co-Chairpersons

Item 2. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

Item 3. Report on the Operations and Implementation of the Programme of Work

- 3.1 Update on the Implementation of the GLIS Portal
- 3.2 Development and Promotion of Digital Object Identifiers

Item 4. PGRFA Documentation and descriptors

- 4.1 Descriptors for Crop Wild Relatives Conserved in Situ
- 4.2 Review and development of descriptors for specific crops

**Item 5. Access and Use of PGRFA Information through the Global Information System
and other relevant developments**

WEDNESDAY, 21 APRIL 2021 (12:00 – 15:00 CEST)

Item 6. Report on Partnerships and Collaboration

Item 7. Revision and Update of the GLIS Program of Work

Item 8. Other Matters

Item 9. Closure