



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



The International Treaty
**ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Item 15.4 of the Provisional Agenda

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, Italy, 11 – 16 November 2019

Report on Cooperation with Other International Bodies and Organizations

Executive Summary

Article 19.3(g) of the International Treaty requires the Governing Body to establish and maintain cooperation with other relevant international organizations and treaty bodies, including in particular the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, on matters covered by this Treaty.

The Governing Body recognizes that cooperation with relevant partners and organizations is important in order to promote the objectives of the International Treaty on a global scale, and advance its implementation. It acknowledges that collaboration with relevant institutions, especially in capacity building, also plays a critical role in assisting countries in effective implementation at national level, and particularly so in promoting harmonious and mutually supportive implementation with other relevant instruments.

During this biennium, collaboration and partnerships with other international bodies and organizations have continued to support and advance implementation of the International Treaty. This document contains a summary report on cooperation and collaborative activities that have taken place during the current biennium

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to take note of the information contained in this report and give any further guidance it considers appropriate for the continued and effective cooperation with relevant international organizations and treaty bodies, taking into account the draft elements for a Resolution provided for its consideration in the *Appendix* to this document.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Article 19.3(g) of the International Treaty stipulates that the Governing Body shall “establish and maintain cooperation with other relevant international organizations and treaty bodies, including in particular the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, on matters covered by this Treaty, including their participation in the funding strategy.”
2. At its Seventh Session, the Governing Body “reaffirm[ed] the need to continue the efforts necessary to ensure that the International Treaty’s objectives and role in the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are recognized and supported by relevant international institutions, organizations and processes”.
3. Cooperation and collaboration with partner organizations and relevant stakeholder groups have taken place in various forms and at different levels, from exchange of information, capacity building on the implementation at national level to supporting policy processes at global level.
4. This document contains a summary report on the cooperation, partnerships and related collaborative activities with other international bodies and organizations as well as other relevant stakeholder groups during the current biennium, to support and advance implementation of the International Treaty.

II. COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

A. AFRICAN UNION

5. In continuation of the existing partnership, the Secretariat collaborated with the Secretariat of the African Union Commission (AUC) on many occasions during the current biennium. In relation to the Compliance Procedures, a regional capacity-building workshop for the Africa Region was hosted by the AUC in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 30 October to 1 November 2018, to promote reporting by Contracting Parties.
6. The AUC also hosted and provided logistical support to two informal consultations on the Enhancement of the Functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, in Addis Ababa in August 2018 and March 2019.
7. Following a similar arrangement prior to the Seventh Session of the Governing Body, the Secretariat and the AUC will again co-organize the regional preparatory meeting in September 2019 to assist African countries in their preparations for the Eighth Session of the Governing Body.
8. The AUC has also agreed to continue playing a coordinating role for promoting the implementation of the Treaty in and mobilizing capacity building for the countries in the Africa region.

B. BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL

9. The Secretary continued his close collaboration with Bioversity International, especially in the framework of the Joint Capacity Building Programme. A new tool to assist national-level policy actors to identify appropriate measures to implement the Multilateral System within their country has been published online.¹ The Secretariat also participated in two capacity-building workshops on genetic resources policies under the CGIAR Genebank Platform, led by Bioversity International and featuring especially the Multilateral System. The workshops were held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 17 to 20

¹ Available at: https://www.bioversityinternational.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Decision_JCBP_2018.pdf

September 2018 for the Near East Region and in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 2 to 5 April 2019 for the Africa Region.

10. In addition to organizing training programmes and seminars on issues relevant to the International Treaty, representatives of Bioversity International continued to actively participate in several policy processes of the International Treaty, such as the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System and the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights and the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use.

11. During the current biennium, the Secretary has liaised with Bioversity International and the International Coconut Community (ICC) on the transfer of the hosting and coordination of the International Coconut Genetic Resources Network (COGENT). Following the decision by COGENT's Steering Committee in October 2017, ICC will be the new host and act on behalf of COGENT in the agreements with FAO concerning the international coconut collections. Further information is provided in the document, IT/GB-8/19/15.6, *Reports from Institutions that have Concluded Agreements with the Governing Body under Article 15 of the International Treaty*.

12. In September 2018, the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Bioversity International, the ABS Capacity Development Initiative and the Centro Internacional de la Papa (CIP) jointly organized, at CIP Headquarters in Lima, Peru, a Tandem workshop on the implementation of International Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol of the CBD for the Latin America and Caribbean Region. The workshop brought together the respective National Focal Points of both the Treaty and Nagoya Protocol from each of the countries in the region to discuss the mutually supportive implementation of the two instruments.

13. In May 2019, the Secretary participated in a special event celebrating the 45th anniversary of Bioversity International and the launching of its alliance with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), held at FAO Headquarters. He underscored the long-standing and mutually supportive relationship between the Secretariat and Bioversity International and emphasized the need to continue this collaboration in view of new emerging challenges for crop genetic diversity.

C. GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (GFAR)

14. The Secretariat attended the preparatory meeting on Forgotten Foods organized by the GFAR Secretariat with the support of Federal Office for Agriculture and Food of Germany (BLE) and the Food Forever Initiative of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, in Bonn, Germany, from 29 to 30 November 2018. The focus of the meeting was on how to establish Collective Action or a Global Strategy on Forgotten Foods and on identifying key actors and areas of work. The initiative aims to identify a new vision of diversified agriculture with the objective to shift the current yield-for-profit paradigm of agriculture towards the diversification of agri-food systems to achieve zero hunger and provide nutritious, healthy and sustainable diets.

D. INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NEW VARIETIES OF PLANTS (UPOV)

15. The Governing Body in Resolution 7/2017 “[w]elcome[d] the decision of the UPOV Council to review the FAQ on the interrelations between the UPOV Convention and the International Treaty and exchange of experience and information on the implementation of the UPOV Convention and the International Treaty, and request[ed] the Secretary to explore how Contracting Parties of the Treaty could further contribute to these processes, and to continue the dialogue with UPOV on these matters.”

16. Accordingly, the Secretary contacted the Secretary-General of UPOV to inform the latter about the outcomes of the Seventh Session of the Governing Body and to explore the possibilities for Contracting Parties to contribute to these processes, as well as for the Secretariat to continue the dialogue with the UPOV Office on these and related issues.

17. Regarding the process established by the UPOV Council to review the frequently asked questions (“FAQ”) on the interrelations between the UPOV Convention and the Treaty, the Secretary issued a notification inviting those Contracting Parties who are also members of UPOV as well as those stakeholders who are accredited observers to the UPOV Council, to contribute to the process.

18. The Consultative Committee of UPOV at its last meeting in November 2018 noted the responses containing proposals for revision of the FAQ, on how to facilitate the exchanges of experiences and information on the implementation of the UPOV Convention and the International Treaty with the involvement of stakeholders and other proposals received. It requested the Vice Secretary-General of UPOV to consult the Secretary on how the objectives of the International Treaty might be reflected in the FAQ, and to explore means on how to facilitate the exchanges of experiences and information on the implementation of the UPOV Convention and the International Treaty.

19. In this regard, the Secretary received a letter from the Vice Secretary-General of UPOV proposing a new initiative, which would also include the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), on the development of a brief explanation of the objectives and mutual supportiveness of the CBD, UPOV and the International Treaty, and invited the Secretary to join this new initiative. The Vice Secretary-General of UPOV noted that in the case of UPOV, this explanation would form the basis for one of UPOV’s FAQs and it is further anticipated that the new initiative could form a basis to explore means to facilitate exchanges of experiences and information on the implementation of the UPOV, CBD and the International Treaty. A similar invitation had also been sent to the Executive Secretary of the CBD by the Vice Secretary-General of UPOV.

20. Based on this invitation, the Secretary is exploring jointly with the Vice Secretary-General of UPOV and the Executive Secretary of the CBD the proposal for this new initiative. This also includes how the initiative may relate to both the discussions on possible areas of interrelations between the International Treaty, especially its Article 9, and the UPOV Convention, as well as the ongoing process to review the FAQ on these interrelations.

21. The UPOV Office contributed to the work of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers’ Rights (Expert Group). As the representative of one of the three other stakeholders designated by the Bureau of the Eighth Session pursuant to Resolution 7/2017, an expert from the UPOV Office actively participated in the Expert Group. The Proceedings of the Symposium on Possible Interrelations between the Treaty and the UPOV Convention were made available to the Expert Group.

22. The Consultative Committee of UPOV, at its meeting in November 2018, also encouraged UPOV members, who were also Contracting Parties to the International Treaty, to send submissions on measures implementing Article 9 of the International Treaty, using the template developed by the Expert Group, and requested the Office of UPOV to report to the Consultative Committee on the progress of the Expert Group.

23. As part of the membership campaign, as well as to support relevant discussions on possible areas of interrelations between the International Treaty and the UPOV Convention, the Secretariat participated in two one-day national stakeholder consultations in October 2018 in Pretoria, South Africa, held back-to-back, one on South Africa’s accession to the International Treaty and another one on South Africa’s approval of UPOV Convention of 1991.

E. LIAISON GROUP OF BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS (BLG)

24. The Secretariat participated the second meeting of Communication Officers of Biodiversity-related Conventions, United Nations Environment Programme and other partners, which took place in Dubai in October 2018, in the margins of the Thirteenth Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention. Major issues discussed include developing and disseminating a common Biodiversity message as well as an update on media monitoring tool that could be shared amongst the group.

25. The Secretariat also participated in the Steering Committee of the project “Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity”, hosted by United Nations Environment Programme, which has been planning awareness raising activities for various occasions. In addition to capacity building, another focus of the project is on the provision of inputs for the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework process, including the development of the Data Reporting Tool (DART) to facilitate knowledge management for national reporting to Biodiversity-related Conventions.

26. The Secretariat also participated, together with the Chair and some members of the Bureau, in the “Consultation Workshop of Biodiversity-related Conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework”, in June 2019, in Switzerland. They emphasized the necessity for the emerging Global Biodiversity Framework should reflect the objectives and the work of the respective biodiversity treaties and conventions. The Secretariat will continue to closely follow the consultation process for the elaboration of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework as it represents a unique opportunity to approach biodiversity in a cooperative and complementary manner and reflect the priorities and contributions of the International Treaty to the global biodiversity agenda and governance.

F. UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

27. The Secretariat has continued its participation in the meetings of the InforMEA Initiative and its Steering Committee which is coordinated by the UNEP. In particular, it has collaborated with the UN Environment to make available through the InforMEA Portal, the information on the Treaty membership and Resolutions adopted by the Governing Body of the International Treaty.

G. WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION (WIPO)

28. Following the request of the Governing Body in Resolution 12/2017 “to continue participating in [...] the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore of WIPO, as appropriate and subject to the availability of financial resources”, the Secretariat participated in the 35th session of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (the Committee), which was held from 19 to 23 March 2018 and dedicated to genetic resources.

29. The Committee held its last meeting for the current biennium in June 2019 and agreed to submit to the 2019 WIPO General Assembly, to be held from 30 September to 9 October 2019, a revised draft of the Consolidated Document Relating to Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources (WIPO/GRTKF/IC/40/6). In the document, the Multilateral System of the International Treaty was mentioned in the context of the possible sources of genetic resources. Since further work is needed, the Committee has recommended to the WIPO General Assembly to renew its mandate for the 2020-2021 biennium, with two five-day meetings on genetic resources with a focus on addressing unresolved issues and considering options for a draft legal instrument, as well as possibly a one-day meeting of an ad hoc expert group to support the process.

30. Following Resolution 7/2017 of the Governing Body, the Secretary has been exploring with the Traditional Knowledge Division of WIPO the possibility of carrying out a process of identifying possible areas of interrelations between the International Treaty, in particular its Article 9, and relevant instruments of WIPO, similar to the ongoing process with UPOV, in cooperation with the WIPO Secretariat and in an inclusive and participatory manner.

31. As part of the general ongoing partnerships with the International Treaty, the WIPO Secretariat participated in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers’ Rights in September 2018 and May 2019, and emphasized its willingness to provide intellectual property-related information in support of the process and provided an update on the work of the above-mentioned Committee. The WIPO Secretariat also submitted several publications to the Expert Group that might be of interest to its work.

III. COOPERATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

A. SVALBARD GLOBAL SEED VAULT

32. In Resolution 12/2017, the Governing Body reaffirmed its commitment and support to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault following its first ten years of operation and welcomed the invitation of the Government of Norway for the Chairperson of the Governing Body to act as the Chairperson of the Seed Vault's International Advisory Panel and requested the Chairperson of the Governing Body, for the time being, to carry out the functions as may be required by that role. In accordance with the request of the Governing Body, the Chairperson of the Eighth Session chaired the International Advisory Panel during the biennium. The government of Norway will provide additional information to the Governing Body in this regard.

33. By the same Resolution, the Governing Body requested the Secretary to further explore with the Government of Norway other practical means to further enhance the linkages between the International Treaty and the Seed Vault. As part of the 10th anniversary celebrations, the Norwegian government organized the Seed Vault Summit, in collaboration with its partners, opened by the Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food, Jon Georg Dale. As part of the events, 23 genebank managers from different parts of world deposited new accessions into the Seed Vault, bringing its total to more than one million accessions. After 10 years of operation, technical improvements will be carried out at the Seed Vault.²

B. FARMERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

34. The International Treaty attaches great importance to involving farmers and the civil society in its work and has continued to involve them in policy processes and other activities during this biennium. Similarly, the Secretariat has continued direct collaboration and interactions with them.

35. Farmers and representatives of civil society organizations actively participated in the meetings of the Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights (Expert Group) and provided inputs to the electronic consultations of the Ad-Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use. The Secretary supported the one-day consultation held among farmers and civil society representatives prior to the first meeting of the Expert Group, in collaboration with the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). IPC organized a series of consultations to support farmers and civil society organizations in participation to the work of the Expert Group. They are also invited to the training workshops on conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and Farmers' Rights held in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

36. Farmers and civil society organizations continued to actively participate in the process to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System, through their representatives at both informal consultations and formal meetings of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System (Working Group), as well as by submitting relevant written inputs to these processes.

C. PRIVATE SECTOR

37. During this biennium, the seed industry has continued to play an active role in the process of enhancing the functioning of the Multilateral System through its representatives participating in both informal consultations and formal meetings of the Working Group, who upon request by the Co-chairs, made several constructive proposals.

² See the Document, IT/GB-8/19/15.4/4, *Report of Norway on the Management of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault*, for more information

38. Representatives of the private sector also participated in the meetings of the Ad-Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights and provided inputs to the electronic consultations of the Ad-Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use.

39. The Secretary also continued the direct interaction and exchange of information with representatives of the Seed Industry. He attended the yearly World Seed Congress of the International Seed Federation in June 2018 in Brisbane, Australia, and in June 2019 in Nice, France. He also attended the General Assembly of the European Seed Association in October 2018 in Madrid.

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

40. The Governing Body is invited to take note of the information contained in this report and give any further guidance it considers appropriate for the continued and effective cooperation with relevant organizations and treaty bodies, taking into account the draft elements for a Resolution provided for its consideration in the *Appendix* to this document

APPENDIX

DRAFT ELEMENTS FOR RESOLUTION **/2019**COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND ORGANIZATIONS**

PART I: INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND ORGANIZATIONS**THE GOVERNING BODY,**

Recalling its Resolution 12/2017 and other previous relevant Resolutions and decisions;

Reaffirming the importance of maintaining and further strengthening cooperation with the relevant international organizations, institutions and partners in order to advance the objectives and implementation of the International Treaty;

Noting with appreciation the continued cooperation, collaboration and support provided by relevant international organizations during the current biennium;

Welcoming the continued active engagement of other relevant stakeholder groups, in particular civil society organizations, farmers' organizations and the seed industry, to support the implementation of the International Treaty and its relevant policy processes;

Cognizant of the importance of harmonious and mutually supportive implementation of the International Treaty with relevant instruments and processes especially at the national level, and noting the continued importance of assisting developing country Contracting Parties in this regard;

1. *Reaffirms* the need to continue the efforts necessary to ensure that the International Treaty's objectives and role in the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are recognized and supported by relevant international institutions, organizations and processes;
2. *Encourages* Contracting Parties to take initiatives to strengthen the harmonious and mutually supportive implementation of the International Treaty and other relevant international instruments and their various goals and commitments in a coherent, clear, and mutually supportive manner; and requests the Secretary to facilitate such initiatives upon request and subject to the availability of resources;
3. *Welcomes* the continued support and coordination provided by the African Union Commission for Contracting Parties from the African Region in the implementation of the International Treaty, and *requests* the Secretary to continue strengthening this collaboration as well as to seek opportunities to establish cooperation with other relevant regional organizations and institutions for the promotion and implementation of the International Treaty;
4. *Reaffirms* the need to expand the Joint Capacity Building Programme with Bioversity International and to ensure that the Secretary continue play an active role of coordination, monitoring and analysis of results and impacts, and calls upon Contracting Parties and donors to provide additional funding to support its continuation;
5. *Requests* the Secretary to continue and further strengthen and expand the collaboration with Bioversity International, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the ABS Capacity Development Initiative and other capacity building providers, in their support to Contracting Parties in implementing the International Treaty and the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol in a harmonious and mutually supportive manner;

6. **Encourages** the members of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions to continue their collaboration in accordance with their respective mandates and, subject to availability of financial resources, requests the Secretary to continue participating actively in the relevant activities of the Biodiversity Liaison Group, particularly on the development of the Global Biodiversity Framework, including proposing relevant outreach activities and biodiversity indicators relevant to the implementation of the International Treaty;
7. **Urges** Contracting Parties to take measures to enhance synergies in their implementation of or participation in biodiversity-related conventions to promote policy coherence, improve efficiency and enhance coordination and cooperation at all levels and invites international organizations and donors to provide financial resources to support efforts that encourage synergies in policy development and the fulfilment of obligations under the biodiversity-related conventions;
8. **Requests** the Secretary to continue participating in the Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (InforMEA) being coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme and making information available to Contracting Parties and other stakeholders through the InforMEA Portal, including data related to the implementation of the International Treaty for new biodiversity indicators;
9. **Requests** the Secretary to continue participating in relevant meetings of UPOV and in the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore of WIPO, as appropriate and subject to the availability of financial resources;
10. **Requests** the Secretary to continue exploring with the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Secretary-General of UPOV a possible new initiative proposed by UPOV to develop brief explanations of the objectives and mutual supportiveness of the International Treaty, the CBD and the UPOV Convention, as a possible basis to facilitate exchanges of experiences and information on the implementation of the UPOV, the CBD and the International Treaty;
11. **Encourages** other relevant stakeholder groups, in particular civil society organizations, farmers' organizations and the seed industry, to further strengthen their engagement and cooperation to advance the implementation of the International Treaty;
12. **Requests** the Secretary to continue to report to the Governing Body on cooperation with other relevant international bodies and organizations, and related collaborative activities.