



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



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

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, 11 – 16 November 2019

Report of the Chair

Executive Summary

At its Seventh Session, the Governing Body elected Ms Christine Dawson as the Chair of the Eighth Session of the Governing Body, in accordance with Rule II of the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Body. In this document, the Chair reports on various activities she undertook in her capacity as the Chair, and on certain tasks delegated by the Governing Body to the Bureau of the Eighth Session, as well as on other significant developments affecting the International Treaty since the Seventh Session of the Governing Body.

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to take note of the Chair's Report.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The period since the conclusion of the Seventh Session of the Governing Body has been an exciting and productive period, and I am pleased to share with you an overview of our work and activities in taking the International Treaty forward based on the Programme of Work adopted at the Seventh Session.
2. It also has been a period of intensive discussions and negotiations as the subsidiary bodies have been exploring various ways and options for the enhancement of the Treaty's core systems and mechanisms, in particular, the Multilateral System and the Funding Strategy. I am convinced that the preparatory work, undertaken during the intersessional period, will help us move forward on the next phase of the Treaty's growth by strengthening its functions and operations.
3. This Session marks a major milestone because we celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the entry into force of the International Treaty. Therefore, it is time to look back and take stock of the achievements. This occasion also offers us an opportunity to project our aspirations and ideas for the International Treaty into the future.
4. Before proceeding, I would like to thank the Vice-Chairs, my fellow Bureau members, for their dedication in preparing for this Session. They have actively coordinated various issues within their respective regions, and have always worked with a good spirit of collaboration. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the Secretary of the Treaty, Mr Kent Nnadozie, and the staff of the Secretariat for their work and support throughout the biennium.
5. This report contains an overview of the collective work of the Bureau and refers to the major activities related to the preparations for this Session and the activities delegated to the Bureau by the Eighth Session of the Governing Body. It also provides an update and highlights of some key partnerships, as well as my activities as Chair of the Eighth Session.

II. MAJOR WORK TRACKS

6. During the intersessional period, the Bureau met twice in Rome to prepare the Provisional Agenda and to advise the Secretary on the preparation of the documentation for this Session, as this is the main task assigned to the Bureau. As is customary, the Bureau also worked through electronic means and telephone conferencing to carry out its tasks on a number of issues. As you would have probably noted, we have introduced a few changes in the way the documentation is organized and presented, with the aim of making it easier to keep track of the documents we will consider under each agenda item.
7. It is worth noting that the Vice-Chairs facilitated the nomination of experts representing the seven regions in the intersessional processes, including the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights, and have closely followed the progress made in preparation for the technical consultations and other meetings.
8. At the Seventh Session, the Governing Body delegated other important assignments to the Bureau regarding the development of the Draft Multi-Year Programme of Work for the International Treaty (MYPOW). This document will help us to plan and structure implementation of the International Treaty and the work of the Governing Body in a coherent and integrated manner. Consequently, it is expected to anticipate and bring attention to the major outputs of the respective sessions of the Governing Body.
9. I am pleased to report that we have put forward, for your further review and consideration, a structured MYPOW. I hope that over the years it will be considered a useful programming tool. In the view of the Bureau, it should be a living document, and it should be regularly reviewed to sustain its relevance. Through the discussions on this document, the Bureau has also guided the Secretary in the preparation of the discussion on "digital sequence information".

10. Regarding the fourth Call for Proposals under the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF). I am pleased to report that the Bureau has participated in the process according to the procedures. This process included the nomination of the members of the Panel of Experts and the consideration and review of the various updates of the roadmap prepared by the Secretary. In particular, the Bureau participated in the elaboration of criteria and principles for the evaluation of pre-proposals in the context of the revised methodology for the selection of projects. Furthermore, the Bureau agreed on the level of allocations to projects, taking into account the total funding available. Consequently, the Bureau approved a list of twenty projects for funding.

11. This Bureau has also followed the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilisation.

12. The Governing Body requested the Bureau of the Eight Session to carry out the selection and appointment of members to the Crop Trust Executive Board during 2019, in accordance with the Procedures for the Selection and Appointment of Members of the Executive Board of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, to ensure the continued smooth and efficient functioning of the Executive Board.

13. Accordingly, at its second meeting, the Bureau agreed to undertake the process for the selection and appointment of four members of the Executive Board. The Vice-Chairpersons have called for nominations from their respective regions, and the Bureau will continue its consultations on this issue. I will provide an update on this process under the relevant agenda item.

14. The Bureau has also engaged in discussions on capacity building. Based on an initial proposal made by the Secretary, the Bureau requested the Secretary to develop and bring a document for the consideration of the Eighth Session outlining a capacity development strategy for the International Treaty. Based on guidance from the Bureau, the document contains details on the different types of capacity development activities the Treaty undertakes, including specific target groups and goals. Likewise, such a strategy may bring coherence to existing training and capacity development activities under the Treaty.

15. At this Session, the Governing Body may consider the respective mandates and composition of subsidiary bodies, as it deems appropriate. It is important to maintain flexibility in the establishment and functioning of subsidiary bodies, however, the Governing Body may also benefit from a review of practices and experiences of ongoing intersessional work. With this in mind, the Bureau guided the Secretary on the preparation of a document on subsidiary bodies and intersessional processes of the Governing Body. The Bureau found it useful for reference purposes and requested the Secretary to make it available as an information document for this Session.

16. It is worth remembering that the Governing Body adopted its Communication Strategy two years ago, which the Secretary has proposed for implementation. The Bureau has also received regular updates on the communication activities, and products and it has provided advice and suggestions, in particular regarding the need to increase the visibility of the work the International Treaty is funding on the ground and to show its impact.

III. SELECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LONG-TERM PROCEDURES FOR THE SELECTION OF THE SECRETARY

17. At its first meeting in April 2018, the Bureau held consultations with the Independent Chairperson of the Council of FAO and the FAO Secretariat. The Independent Chair of the Council reported on the decisions taken by the Council at its 155th Session, in December 2016, on the issue of the procedures for the selection and appointment of the secretaries of bodies under Article XIV of the FAO Constitution. At the same meeting, the Legal Counsel of FAO recalled the positions of the Organization stated in previous documents. The Bureau noted these points and shared the general concerns of the Governing Body of the Treaty, and agreed to continue to consult.

18. At the second meeting, the Bureau discussed the Procedures for the appointment and renewal of the Secretary of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and agreed on the path forward. The Governing Body will be invited to consider a decision on this topic.

IV. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

19. While at the Governing Body we will consider a wide range of the partnerships and collaborations of the International Treaty, in this report I focus on a few I consider crucial for this instrument.

20. At its Seventh Session, the Governing Body welcomed the invitation of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to the Governing Body to exchange information with the Commission at regular intervals on the process of enhancing the Multilateral System to avoid duplication of efforts. It also requested the Secretary to prepare, with the guidance of the Bureau of the Eighth Session of the Governing Body, a report to be made available to the seventeenth Regular Session of the Commission.

21. I am pleased to report that the documentation was submitted on time. As a result, the Commission noted the importance of coordination with the International Treaty and enumerated a list of areas for cooperation, for instance in the organization of joint international symposia on in situ conservation of crop wild relatives and wild food plants and on on-farm management of farmer's varieties.

22. With regard to the collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Nagoya Protocol, the Bureau underlined the importance of the International Treaty Secretariat and Contracting Parties participating at this early stage of, and staying engaged in, the process for the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

23. In this context, I and four other members of the Bureau participated in the "Consultation Workshop of Biodiversity-related Conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework", in June 2019, in Switzerland.

24. A general view expressed in the preparation of the Post-2020 Framework is that it should be more inclusive than the current strategic plan while being ambitious. Let me add that there is no greater ambition than an approach that is truly cross-sectoral and actionable.

25. In general terms, I am pleased to report that the general feeling was that the new Framework should reflect the objectives of the global treaties and conventions related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and connect elements of their work at genetic, species or ecosystem levels. Ideally, the formulation of the Framework should facilitate its implementation at the national level. However, we need to increase outreach, particularly at the national level, to reconcile, in the collective vision, the ideas of biodiversity and agriculture, which for us go hand in hand.

26. In my role as Chair, and responding to the invitation that the Government of Norway made to the Governing Body, I participated and chaired the first International Advisory Panel (IAP) of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in February 2018. In addition to providing overview information about the operations, the Government informed the Panel on the ongoing construction improvements, the procedures for attracting new eligible genebanks as depositors, the future strategies for increasing the number of deposited samples, and public awareness activities.

27. The Government of Norway has also provided to the Bureau regular reports and updates on the operations of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Furthermore, the Bureau has also noted the ongoing collaboration activities of the Government of Norway with the Secretariat and others, including information contained in the annual reports of the Executive Board of the Global Crop Diversity Trust to the Governing Body submitted under the current institutional framework.

V. CONCLUSION

28. In closing, I would like us to be mindful that after 15 years of operation, the International Treaty is truly at the threshold of a new phase. In the fulfilment of our obligations, we will review the recommendations for the enhancement of the Multilateral System, the review of the Funding Strategy, conservation, and sustainable use, the implementation Farmers' Rights, and other areas of work. In doing so, we will shape a vision for the International Treaty: A vision we all want to see implemented in the years to come.

We should not forget that the future of the International Treaty depends on us. We are, therefore, facing moments of deep responsibility at the Eighth Session, to shape the Treaty so that it helps to conserve the resources we depend on. More than ever, we will need to redouble our efforts at all levels to reach across sectors to provide our fullest contribution to biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and global food security.