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STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its Seventeenth Regular Session in February 2019, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) considered the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (Global Plan of Action¹). The Commission requested FAO to continue coordinating and supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, in collaboration with regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations.² It also encouraged FAO to continue pursuing extra-budgetary resources to support developing countries in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

2. This document summarizes the activities undertaken by FAO in collaboration with its partners to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, for consideration by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (Working Group).

II. SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

Monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

3. The Commission, at its Seventeenth Regular Session, took note of the *First Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (First Implementation Report)³ which was based on progress reports submitted by 44 countries⁴. Of relevant international organizations, only Bioversity International provided a report on its contributions to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including activities of three regional networks (the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN), the Latin America Forest Genetic Resources Network (LAFORGEN) and the Sub-Saharan Forest Genetic Resources Programme (SAFORGEN)). The European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN), hosted by the European Forest Institute, also submitted its progress report.

4. The Commission invited countries to continue implementing the Global Plan of Action and encouraged them to address the findings of the First Implementation Report.⁵ It also encouraged all Members to nominate a National Focal Point on forest genetic resources and to report on their efforts to implement the Global Plan of Action in the future.

5. A second report on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action is scheduled for the Nineteenth Regular Session of the Commission in 2023. It will be prepared based on the country reports that are currently being finalized for *The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* (Second Report). The document *Status of preparation of The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (CGRFA/WG-FGR-6/21/3)* provides detailed information on the progress made in preparing the second global assessment. Furthermore, the document *Development of a new global information system on forest genetic resources (CGRFA/WG-FGR-6/21/4)* provides more information on the ongoing activities to create a new tool for monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/b7f4bcd7-0696-4f5a-aa3d-e1e19acfa735>

² CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 76.

³ CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.1.

⁴ Armenia, Australia, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Poland, Sri Lanka, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, United States of America and Vanuatu.

⁵ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 74.

Voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources

6. At its Seventeenth Regular Session, the Commission endorsed *Revised draft voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources*⁶ and noted the importance of countries having a national or subnational strategy for forest genetic resources in place in view of climate change. The voluntary guidelines are being finalized for publication by updating the examples of approaches based on the country reports received by FAO for the preparation of the Second Report.

Funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action

7. The Commission adopted the *Funding Strategy for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources* (Funding Strategy)⁷ at its Seventeenth Regular Session. It encouraged countries to actively mainstream forest genetic resources into larger and holistic actions on sustainable forest management, including agroforestry and forest strategies, and forest-based climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.⁸ It also encouraged countries to identify needs for specific and strategic actions on forest genetic resources. Furthermore, the Commission encouraged donors to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and its Funding Strategy.⁹

8. In line with the Funding Strategy, FAO has supported many countries in developing large national projects that aim at enhancing sustainable forest management, including forest and landscape restoration, for example. These projects are expected to also contribute, directly or indirectly, to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Funding for such large national projects has been predominantly provided by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

9. The FAO portfolio of GEF projects focusing on forests and trees has increased significantly.¹⁰ It includes the Impact Programme on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes (DSL), launched by the GEF in 2019, to support efforts to avoid, reduce and reverse deforestation, degradation and desertification in 11 countries in Africa and Asia (Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malawi, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe). The DSL Impact Programme is led by FAO in partnership with the World Bank, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the World Wildlife Fund. The GEF funding for this programme is about USD 104 million. Most programme partner countries are planning to strengthen their tree seed systems as part of the national projects. Furthermore, FAO is currently supporting several other countries¹¹ to implement GEF-funded projects that are aiming to enhance sustainable forest management or forest and landscape restoration.

⁶ CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.3.

⁷ CGRFA-17/19/Report, Appendix D.

⁸ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 75.

⁹ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 76.

¹⁰ Further information on FAO-led GEF projects is available at <http://www.fao.org/gef/en/>

¹¹ Forest Resources Assessment and Monitoring to Strengthen Forestry Policy and Knowledge Framework in Azerbaijan (2017–2021); Forest and Landscape Restoration supporting Landscape and Livelihoods Resilience in the Central African Republic (2018–2022); Sustainable forest management to enhance the resilience of forests in China to climate change (2016–2022); Sustainable Management of Wooded Production Landscapes for Biodiversity Conservation in Haiti (2019–2023); Payment for Ecosystem Services to Support Forest Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods in Mozambique (2017–2022); Reversing Deforestation and Degradation in High Conservation Value Chilgoza Pine Forests in Pakistan (2018–2021); Enhancing Biodiversity, Ecosystem Flows, Carbon Stocks through Sustainable Forest Management and Restoration of Degraded Forestlands in the Philippines (2018–2022); Landscape Restoration for Ecosystem Functionality and Climate Change Mitigation in the Republic of São Tomé e Príncipe (2018–2023); Promoting Sustainable Forest Management and Improving Livelihoods through Integrated Land Use Planning and Forest Landscape Restoration in Sri Lanka (2018–2022); Sustainable Management of Forests in Mountain and Valley Areas in Uzbekistan (2018–2023).

10. FAO's portfolio of GCF projects has also grown rapidly and it now includes ongoing projects and approved full proposals with special emphasis on forests and trees in 11 countries (Argentina, Armenia, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Paraguay and Sudan)¹². These GCF projects aim at combating deforestation and mitigate climate change with tree planting efforts and by enhancing the management of existing forests, and they often also include other forest-related activities to improve the livelihoods of local people and to conserve forest biodiversity.

11. Other FAO projects and programmes have also continued to contribute to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Under the framework of the Action Against Desertification (AAD) initiative,¹³ FAO and its partners are reinforcing tree seed systems in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Haiti, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan as part of the efforts to restore forests and trees. Furthermore, the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM)¹⁴ has expanded its activities and is currently supporting large-scale restoration initiatives with different donors and partners in 18 countries¹⁵. These projects are increasingly exploring ways to also enhance the management of forest genetic resources and to restore genetically diverse forests.

12. At the global level, FAO mobilized extra-budgetary resources (approximately USD 1 million) for launching two projects on forest genetic resources in 2020. These projects, both financed by the Government of Germany, will support the preparation of the Second Report and the development of a new global information system on these resources. The projects contribute directly to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and in particular its first priority area (increase the availability of, and access to, information on forest genetic resources).

Regional collaboration and networks

13. At its Seventeenth Regular Session, the Commission requested FAO to continue coordinating the implementation of the Global Plan of Action in collaboration with regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations.¹⁶ FAO has thus continued its collaboration with the regional networks, and also plans to strengthen their role in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, subject to the availability of financial resources.

14. In March 2019, FAO briefed, through a webinar, the EUFORGEN Steering Committee on the findings of the First Implementation Report and on the preparatory process for the Second Report. In April 2019, the Steering Committee finalized the strategic objectives and the implementation plan for EUFORGEN Phase VI (2020-2024), including contributions to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

15. In April 2019, Bioversity International and FAO organized a regional workshop in Kumasi, Ghana for the SAFORGEN National Coordinators to review the progress made in implementing the regional strategy the network had developed in 2016 based on the Global Plan of Action. The workshop was organized in collaboration with the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana and it was attended by national experts from 20 countries¹⁷, as well as representatives of the Botanic Gardens Conservation International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the World Agroforestry Center. The workshop also discussed the findings of the First Implementation Report.

¹² Further information on FAO-led GCF projects is available at <http://www.fao.org/climate-change/international-finance/green-climate-fund/en/>

¹³ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/en/>

¹⁴ <http://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/en/>

¹⁵ Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fiji, Guatemala, Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Republic of Guinea, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Uganda and Vanuatu.

¹⁶ CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 76.

¹⁷ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo and Uganda.

16. In June 2019, the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN) updated the Twenty-eight Session of the FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission, held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, on the implementation of its regional strategy, which is based on the Global Plan of Action.

Awareness-raising and information-sharing

17. In the *Strategy for the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources*¹⁸, agreed by its Fifteenth Regular Session in 2015, the Commission encouraged FAO to share information related to the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources. In response, FAO has continued efforts, in collaboration with its partners, to increase international awareness of the Global Plan of Action and the importance of forest genetic resources.

18. In 2019 and 2020, FAO briefed its Regional Forestry Commissions in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East and North America on the forestry-relevant outcomes of the Seventeenth Regular Session of the Commission. Furthermore, FAO provided a similar briefing to the Twenty-Fifth Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry in October 2020. The Committee emphasized the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture, including access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization.¹⁹

19. In October 2019, FAO presented an update on monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and the preparation of the Second Report to the Annual Meeting of the OECD Scheme on Forest Seed and Plant, held in Vienna, Austria. In December 2019, FAO launched a new website on forest genetic resources.²⁰

20. In 2020, the International Day of Forests (21 March) was celebrated with the theme “forests and biodiversity”²¹ and one of the key messages stressed the importance of forest genetic diversity.

21. The State of the World’s Forests 2020 report, published by FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), focused on forests, biodiversity and people.²² The report includes a summary of the findings of *The State of the World’s Forest Genetic Resources* and the First Implementation Report, as well as case studies on forest genetic resources.

22. In 2020, FAO also released several other publications that aimed at increasing awareness on the management of forest genetic resources. These included two thematic studies; one on indicators of the genetic diversity of trees²³, and another on tree genetic diversity and the livelihoods of rural communities in the tropics²⁴. In addition, FAO prepared an overview paper on the global status of genetic resources for food and agriculture and challenges in their management for the first issue of the newly launched *Genetic Resources* journal²⁵.

23. In the context of the AAD work, a manual was prepared for large-scale restoration, including practical guidance for collecting, handling and storing tree seeds.²⁶ Building on the activities of the FLRM, FAO’s journal of forestry and forest industries, *Unasylva*, released an issue dedicated to forest and landscape restoration²⁷ with an article on the priorities, challenges and opportunities for supplying

¹⁸ CGRFA-15/15/Report, Appendix E.

¹⁹ COFO/2020/REP, paragraph 16.

²⁰ <http://www.fao.org/forest-genetic-resources/en/>

²¹ <http://www.fao.org/international-day-of-forests/previous-years/2020-biodiversity/en/>

²² <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8642en>

²³ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb2492en>

²⁴ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb2488en>

²⁵ <https://www.genresj.org/index.php/grj/article/view/genresj.2020.1.4-16>

²⁶ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca6932en/>

²⁷ <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CB1600EN>

tree germplasm. In 2020, the FLRM also organized several webinars on forest genetic resources in collaboration with Bioversity International.

III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

24. The Working Group may wish to take note of the activities reported. Furthermore, the Working Group may wish to recommend that the Commission:
- i. invite countries to strengthen their efforts to implement the Global Plan of Action;
 - ii. encourage countries to continue mainstreaming forest genetic resources into larger and holistic actions on sustainable forest management and forest-based adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as to identify needs for specific and strategic actions on forest genetic resources;
 - iii. request FAO to continue coordinating and supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, in collaboration with regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations;
 - iv. request FAO to continue its efforts to increase international awareness of the Global Plan of Action and the importance of forest genetic resources: and
 - v. encourage donors to support the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and its Funding Strategy.