



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

NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

New Delhi, India, 19–24 September 2022

Report of the Chair

Note by the Secretary

At its Eighth Session, the Governing Body elected Ms Yasmina El Bahloul (Morocco) as the Chair of the Ninth 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 Ninth 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 Chairperson's Report.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the conclusion of the Eighth Session of the Governing Body we have all continued to demonstrate our firm commitment towards the implementation of the International Treaty despite the considerable limitations and constraints we have faced. I would like to stress, in particular, the determination of the Government of India in the planning and hosting of the Ninth Session of the Governing Body in New Delhi, undeterred by the various changes of dates.

2. During this long period, all committees and *ad hoc* working groups have been able to meet virtually, to carry on their work and deliver the outputs the Governing Body had requested. I would like to thank the national focal points from all regions, as well as the delegates and experts, for their engagement and active participation. In this scenario, the Secretary has played an indispensable role facilitating their organization during these difficult times and providing timely support. Those efforts have made it possible for the Treaty's community to remain connected and make progress on the planned deliveries.

3. In a very special way, I thank my colleagues in the Bureau for their dedication in preparing for the First Special Session and the Ninth Session of the Governing Body. During the first two years we met eleven times, and we have continued to meet regularly this year to advise the Secretary and, where possible, take the necessary and appropriate actions consistent with the Rules of Procedures of the International Treaty and the delegation of authority received from the Governing Body.

4. My Bureau colleagues are Mr R.C. Agrawal (Asia), Ms Kim Van Seeters (Europe), Mr Joaquin Salzberg (GRULAC), Mr Ali Chéhadé (Near East), Ms Christine Dawson (North America), and Ms Alison Curran (South West Pacific). During this exceptionally long inter-sessional period, others also served in the Bureau: Mr Kuldeep Singh (Asia), Mr Manrique Altavista (GRULAC), Ms Ángela Teves Libarona (GRULAC), and Ms Alison McMorrow (South West Pacific).

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 Chairperson of the Ninth Session.

II. PROVISION OF ADVICE ON MAJOR WORK TRACKS

6. During the exceptionally long intersessional period, the Bureau was not able meet in person and all our work was conducted mainly through teleconferences and electronic communications. The main task of the Bureau was the provision of advice to the Secretary for the preparation of the Ninth Session and the First Special Session of the Governing Body held in December 2021.

7. In connection with the First Special Session, the Bureau also played a consultative role for the preparation of the draft *Interim* Budget for 2022, in addition to the supervision of the alternative working arrangements.

8. For both Sessions, the Bureau advised the Secretary on the preparation of the Provisional Agenda and the main list of working documents, including the selection of the theme for this Session, which was developed in consultation with the Government of India.

9. It is worth noting that the Vice-Chairpersons facilitated the nomination of experts representing the seven regions in the intersessional processes, including the experts to the *Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use of PGRFA*, the remaining members of the *Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights* selected from Farmers' Organizations, and appointed a member in the *Compliance Committee*.¹

¹ Resolution 5/2019.

10. The Bureau encouraged and followed the efforts of the Secretary to gather information on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operations of the International Treaty, with emphasis on seed distribution. Furthermore, the Bureau closely followed the progress made with the re-scheduling and the preparations for the technical consultations and other meetings, delayed by the pandemic.

11. I am pleased to report that the Bureau noted with appreciation the work of the Secretary and the progress made with the analysis on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including with the reporting and monitoring tools, in collaboration with technical and institutional partners, and the involvement of the Funding Strategy Committee.

12. At its fourth meeting, the Bureau noted the restrictions and limitations imposed by the global pandemic and the need for the extension of the end dates of projects under the fourth cycle of the Benefit-sharing Fund.

13. In the context of the operational procedure for the use of the resources under the Benefit-sharing Fund and the operations for the Fifth Project Cycle (BSF-5), I am pleased to report that the Bureau selected the members of the Independent Panel of Expert tasked with the screening of the pre-proposal and final review of the project proposals.²

14. At the Eighth Session, the Governing Body requested the Bureau, with the support of the Secretary, to conduct the review of subsidiary bodies and intersessional processes. Building upon the elements of the Reference Note on Subsidiary Bodies and Intersessional Processes provided for the Eighth Session, the Secretary presented an updated note to the Bureau, including recommendations on coordination among subsidiary bodies and avoiding duplication of efforts, for the consideration of the Governing Body at its Ninth Session. I am pleased to report that the Bureau considered the note and requested the Secretary to make it available again to the Governing Body.³

15. Furthermore, the Eighth Session of the Governing Body requested the Bureau to develop terms of reference for the Budget Committee, to be presented at the Ninth Session. I am pleased to report that we have put forward, for your further review and consideration, a draft that have benefitted from inputs submitted by all regions.⁴

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

16. Following the end of the first term of the Secretary of the International Treaty and noting the satisfactory performance of the Secretary during the biennium, the Bureau solicited the FAO Management in October 2021 the extension of the appointment of Mr Nnadozie for two additional years as described in document IT/GB/9/22/19.1.

17. I am also pleased to report that the Bureau held consultations with the Independent Chairperson of the Council of FAO and the FAO Management to review the long-term procedures for the selection and appointment of Secretaries of Article XIV bodies, which was endorsed by the FAO Council in December 2021, as contained in Appendix D of its report. Hence, the text is presented in the document, IT/GB/9/22/19.2, for your consideration and approval.

² Annex 1 to Resolution 3/2019.

³ Resolution 13, para.8.

⁴ Resolution 14, para. 30.

IV. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS, RELEVANT ORGANIZATIONS AND POLICY PROCESSES

18. I am pleased to report that the Bureau noted in various meetings the need to move beyond business as usual in building back better after the pandemic, including the opportunity to pursue a more robust Treaty implementation by ensuring that all stakeholders work hand-in-hand. Although the Governing Body will consider a wide range of partnerships and collaborations of the International Treaty, allow me to refer to a few ones the Bureau had the opportunity to interact with and discuss about.

19. The Bureau followed the interaction with the Global Crop Diversity Trust through the submission of its annual reports on activities. In May 2020, the Executive Secretary of the Trust provided an overview of the operations of the CGIAR collections and a preliminary analysis of impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bureau noted that the CGIAR genebanks were facing critical challenges but were quickly putting in place contingency plans. The Bureau also interacted with the Secretary-General of the International Seed Federation (ISF), regarding the information provided by ISF on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the seed industry.

20. I am pleased to report that during this period the Bureau noted the importance of supporting PGRFA collections at risk. A number of emergency situations and events posed threats to certain collections. Some of the risks arose or deteriorated during the pandemic, but they also were caused by natural disasters and other emergency situations. In this context, the Bureau supported the idea of developing a global network of cryobanks through the International Treaty to safety duplicate field and *in vitro* plant collections that are at risk. Furthermore, the Bureau welcomed the Emergency Reserve for Crop Germplasm Collections at Risk.

21. At the Eighth Session, the Governing Body thanked the Government of Norway for the submission of the report on the management and operations of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV) and invited it to continue updating the Bureau and Governing Body on the operations and management of the Seed Vault. I am pleased to report that the Bureau reviewed and took note of the report prepared by the Government of Norway on the management and operations of the Seed Vault.⁵

22. In my role of Chair of the Governing Body, I also chaired the International Advisory Panel of the Seed Vault, in February 2020, providing advice and recommendations for its operations.

23. The Bureau noted the discussions under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for the preparation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and its members participated in various informal virtual workshops organized to exchange views and ideas. I am pleased to report that the Bureau supported the submission of contributions underlining the significant relevance and role of the International Treaty in the development and implementation of the GBF, when adopted.⁶

24. With regard to process for the eighth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-8), the Bureau acknowledged that there was no specific funding window directly available for the implementation of the International Treaty, but noted possible opportunities under the general window for biodiversity.

25. I am pleased to report that the Bureau noted the reformulation of CGIAR's partnerships, knowledge, assets and global presence known as the "One CGIAR", and considered that it would be valuable to bring information about the "One CGIAR" reform, and the report on the cost and operations of the CGIAR genebanks, to the attention of the Governing Body at the Ninth Session.

26. In June 2020, the Secretariat was moved to the Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment (OCB). I am pleased to report that the Bureau met with the head of the new Office,

⁵ [Resolution 12/2019, para 24 and 29.](#)

⁶ Resolution 11/2019, para. 4.

Mr Eduardo Mansur, welcomed the new hosting arrangement, and noted the linkages between food security, climate change and environment in the mandate of the various streams of the Office.

V. CONCLUSION

27. More than two decades have elapsed since the adoption of the International Treaty and the Bureau of the Ninth Session has been aware of the need to advance in the development and enhancement of some of its mechanisms and processes. The inter-sessional process that we conclude with the Ninth Session has demonstrated that the International Treaty is a flexible instrument with a certain capacity to react to the global context. At the same time, we have witnessed certain gaps and fragilities, as well as inequalities in the level of engagement of the various Contracting Parties and regions in the implementation.

28. In concluding my report, I would like to recall that the Treaty provides a fundamental contribution to food security and that plant genetic resources are still under threat as we speak. We will need to further strength our dialogue under this Treaty and in the context of the new Global Biodiversity Framework to bring the cooperation to the next level.

29. I would like to express my gratitude for having had such an opportunity to contribute to this noble activity as Chair of the Africa Region and Chair of the Governing Body. I am very honoured to have met very interesting people. I have learned a lot from them and from their experiences to overcome the different challenges encountered during this intersessional period and from which I will benefit in the future. My great thanks go to the Government of my country, the Kingdom of Morocco, to my colleagues in the Bureau one by one, to the African representatives, to the FAO managers and to all the governmental and non-governmental representatives I have met or interacted with. And a special thanks to Mr Kent Nnadozie and to the devoted team of the secretariat of the Treaty.