



COUNCIL

Hundred and Seventy-second Session

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Developments in fora of importance for the mandate of FAO

Executive summary

In keeping with established practice, the Council is informed of developments in other fora of importance for FAO's mandate:

- 1) Digitalization in the Spotlight;
- 2) Ninth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture;
- 3) The Second International Forum of the Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) and the adoption of the "Praia Call for Action".

Further information on the above topics will be posted as Web Annexes to CL 172/INF/4.

Suggested action by the Council

The above topics are presented to the 172nd Session of the Council for information only.

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I. Digitalization in the Spotlight

1. Building on the momentum of the Innovation and Technology Lever, the power of digital towards assisting immediate global needs and building a better future for our agrifood systems has been further evidenced over the last years. FAO's digital initiatives are tremendously important for the Organization's mandate and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but it is only by amplifying the awareness on and adoption of innovative digital solutions, policies and practices globally that we will achieve the necessary scale to truly transform our agrifood systems. The development of scalable and inclusive fora participation that gather and foster a network of public, private and non-profit organizations committed to responsible digital innovation in agrifood systems worldwide represent, therefore, unique opportunities to put a shared vision into practice: ensuring that digital technologies, including emerging trends like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data driven technologies, are used to their fullest potential in agrifood systems to drive and leverage the use of Digital Public Goods (DPGs) in priority areas such as climate, biodiversity, food security, nutrition, with relevant development outcomes, through the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and creating opportunities for enhanced collaborations.

2. Against this background, FAO's "Digital for Impact" focus is on bringing together the Organization's digital efforts to further develop new digital capabilities, scale up partnerships and foster advocacy to fully enable the digital transformation of agrifood systems. As the landscape of science, technology and innovation is changing rapidly with the amplification of digital tools, big data, and AI, several opportunities are thus arising now where FAO should take bold actions through active participation.

3. During the UN General Assembly (UNGA) this year, the SDG Summit is anticipated to take place on 18-19 September at UN Headquarters in New York to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs. Immediately before that, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), together with the UN System and Partner2Connect will convene the SDG Digital Day in support of the SDG 2023 Summit at the UNGA high-level week.

4. The UN system is gearing up for next year's Summit of the Future to conclude the Global Digital Compact (GDC), as well as embarking on a review of the 20-year implementation process and outcomes following from the original World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), and charting the future of the process beyond 2025, showcasing FAO digital capabilities - for Agrifood Systems Transformation, through successful fora participation with the necessary resources allocated. This will be an enabling tool and mechanism to activate those leverages at various levels and catalyze opportunities for further partnerships and better coordination of resources in collaboration with UN key mechanisms (United Nations Group on the Information Society, (UNGIS), World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Beyond 2025, Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), High Level Committee on Programme (HCLP), Global Digital Compact (GDC)) to integrate information and communication technologies (ICTs) into a joint approach for implementing the activities and initiatives to mark progress on the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation implementation and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

II. Ninth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

5. The Ninth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the "International Treaty"), held from 19 to 24 September 2022 in New Delhi, India, adopted a full work programme for the 2022-2023 biennium, providing policy guidance to strengthen its operational systems and further advance implementation of the International Treaty. Under the theme "*Celebrating the Guardians of Crop Diversity: Towards an Inclusive Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*", the Governing Body recognized and acknowledged the contributions of farmers to the effective management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), and also the role of genebanks. The Governing Body also emphasized

the importance of an inclusive approach to the implementation of the International Treaty in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which was adopted by the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022.

6. One of the major outcomes from the Ninth Session was the re-establishment of the Working Group on the Enhancement of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (Multilateral System), with a view to finalizing measures to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System by the Eleventh Session in 2025. The Multilateral System, which provides for an effective, efficient and transparent system for exchanging plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), was considered vital for agricultural research and development and global food security. Other key outcomes included the convening of a Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights, to be hosted by India in September 2023, and the request to prepare criteria and an outline for the assessment of the state of implementation of farmers' rights at the Eleventh Session.

7. The Treaty's Governing Body thanked FAO for its continued support to the Treaty and invited FAO to continue supporting the efforts to increase the membership of the Treaty by undertaking concrete measures to promote ratification by FAO Members that have not yet done so, with a view to making it a universal agreement; integrate the Treaty into the implementation of relevant initiatives and strategies, such as the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture, the Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and its 2021-23 Action Plan, and the Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031; and continue its active support to the activities of the Treaty as a key international instrument required for the fulfilment of SDG 2 (Zero hunger) and 15 (Life on land).

8. Furthermore, the Treaty's Governing Body adopted a revised Programme of Work on the Global Information System (GLIS) on plant genetic resources and a Food Processing Industry Engagement Strategy. The Governing Body also requested further updates to the draft Capacity Development Strategy 2023-2033 and the outline of an Action Plan for its consideration at the Tenth Session. The full outcomes are provided in the Report of the Ninth Session.¹

III. The Second International Forum of the Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) and the adoption of the "Praia Call for Action"

9. The Second International Forum on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG)² was held from 7 to 10 February 2023 in Praia, Cabo Verde under the theme "*Making agriculture resilient for climate change: Water scarcity, an opportunity for action and collaboration*", under the patronage of the Government of Cabo Verde and with the support of the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture. The Forum promoted and positioned agriculture at the core of climate change discussions in view of the forthcoming events and beyond, such as the UN 2023 Water Conference and the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held from 6 to 17 November 2023 in the United Arab Emirates.

10. The "**Praia Call for Action**"³ was adopted, to: (i) accelerate strategic actions, including policies and investments for collaborative actions among countries, based on country needs and priorities; and (ii) to mobilize greater political support for an enabling environment to address the effects of water scarcity and climate change on global food and water security. WASAG is set to further play a greater role in developing collaborative actions and solutions to the increasing challenges posed by climate change and water scarcity, in order to make agriculture more resilient.

11. Following the recommendation of the 2nd International Forum of WASAG, the following steps are now being taken, including the planning for the organization of the first Rome Water Dialogue on WASAG around April 2024 under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister of Cabo

¹ [Report of the Ninth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture \(fao.org\)](#)

² [WASAG – The Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture](#)

³ <https://www.fao.org/wasag/news/2nd-wasag-forum/praisia-call-for-action/en/>

Verde; and (ii) amending the governance model of WASAG where all members will actively participate in its business with a Chair (currently Cabo Verde) and one or two vice-Chairs (to be decided at the Rome Water Dialogue on WASAG). The current Steering Committee of WASAG will become the Technical Advisory Committee.

12. The Implementation of the Praia Call for Action was discussed at a side event during the UN 2023 Water Conference on 22 March 2023.⁴ The *thematic action areas will be discussed further* by the WASAG partners at the Water for Food Global Conference in Nebraska, United States of America, on 10 May 2023.

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/wasag/news/un-2023-water-conference-side-event/en/>