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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda

INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Sixth Session

Rome, 14-16 November 2012

REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its Sixth Session, the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture will receive reports from international organizations and forums. This report has been prepared by Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) to provide an input to the discussions by the Working Group, and to its advice to the Commission.
2. At their last meetings, the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty have emphasized the need for close cooperation that may gradually lead to an agreed functional division of tasks and activities between the two bodies within the terms of the Treaty. In this context, the Secretariats of the Commission and the International Treaty are preparing a paper for the next sessions of the Commission and the Governing Body on the legal, administrative and financial implications of transferring activities or tasks related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture from the Commission to the Governing Body of the International Treaty.
3. This information document does not focus on any issues related to the transfer of tasks or activities referred above but it provides an update of current work in the context of the International Treaty that may be of relevance to the Working Group. Most sections aim to identify linkages between the areas of work covered in the Report and the issues being discussed by the Working Group at this meeting. The update provided by this Report, while not fully comprehensive, aims at informing Contracting and Non-Contracting Parties on the recent developments related to the International Treaty. Any Member or observer to the Working Group is invited to contact the Secretariat of the International Treaty for further information.

II. SUSTAINABLE USE OF PGRFA

4. The Commission at its Thirteenth Session emphasized *the essential role of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA)* for the implementation of the International Treaty. It also reaffirmed the importance of further work in the area of sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, to support the implementation of the Second GPA (omissis) and for collaboration with the International Treaty in the implementation of its Article 6.
5. The implementation of Article 6 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic resources for Food and Agriculture (the Treaty) on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources has become a standing priority item on the agenda of the Governing Body of the Treaty with the aim of promoting an integrated approach to sustainable use of PGRFA among Contracting Parties.
6. The Governing Body, at its Fourth session, adopted Resolution 7/2011 “Implementation of Article 6 - Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources” and Resolution 6/2011 “Implementation of Article 9, Farmers’ Rights”, both of which are of relevance to the development of the draft Programme of Work (hereafter PoW) on sustainable use of PGRFA. Both resolutions contain a series of important requests that are to be realized by the Secretary, in collaboration with relevant institutions and organizations, FAO technical units and other stakeholders and other key actors, subject to the availability of financial resources and the priorities of the Work Programme and Budget of the Governing Body of the Treaty during the biennium 2012-2013.
7. At the Fourth Session of the Governing Body in 2011, the Governing Body requested the Secretary to launch a process towards the development of a PoW on Sustainable Use of PGRFA, through the organization of a Stakeholders’ Consultation and the establishment of an *Ad Hoc* Technical Committee on Sustainable Use of PGRFA (ACSU).

The PoW will be developed in a participatory manner by means of a Stakeholders’ Consultation and in collaboration with relevant international organizations and key actors, including for example the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), as well as through the establishment of the above-mentioned ACSU. The PoW will prioritise

the progress made in the interpretation of Sustainable Use (Art 6.2), describe those Second GPA priority activities that address them and strengthen the linkage between conservation and sustainable Use of PGRFA and Farmers' Rights.

8. As an integral part of the PoW, it is planned that the Stakeholders' Consultation will discuss the innovative partnerships, mechanisms and processes to support the implementation of Article 6 of the Treaty. The consultation will collect experiences, measures, challenges and opportunities for promoting the sustainable use activities as prioritised in the article 6.2 of the International Treaty. The main aim of the stakeholders' consultation is, therefore, to gather data that will enable the:

- Establishment of a benchmark for the status of the implementation of Article 6 of the International Treaty;
- Development of a program of work on Article 6, under the chapeau of the Treaty, based on identified priority areas of different stakeholders in different countries and regions;

9. The Secretariat of the Treaty, in collaboration with FAO, has prepared a questionnaire which will be evaluated from the ACSU on 8 and 9 November 2012. The revised version of the survey will be inserted in the Treaty's web page and will be available to all the stakeholders until 31 December 2012.

10. The first meeting of the ACSU will be held in FAO on 8 and 9 November 2012. The ACSU will advise, *inter alia*, on the elaboration of the draft PoW and on cooperation with other international organizations and processes in the field of sustainable use. The draft PoW for consideration by the ACSU will be structured as a Target Oriented Plan for a medium- long term for Sustainable Use of PGRFA.

11. The Governing Body, at its Fifth Session, will consider the draft PoW. The draft PoW will have to develop, based on the rolling Global Plan of Action (GPA), steps on how to implement those elements of the GPA addressing sustainable use to support further actions at national, regional and international level. Once adopted, the PoW on Sustainable Use of PGRFA will therefore become an important mechanism to facilitate the implementation by Treaty Contracting Parties of the Second GPA, and in particular of those priority activities related to sustainable use of PGRFA. The Working Group may wish to welcome the development of the PoW and emphasize the importance of this development to further facilitate the implementation of the Second GPA.

III. THE FUNDING STRATEGY OF THE TREATY

12. Pursuant to Article 18 of the Treaty, the Contracting Parties undertake to implement a funding strategy for the implementation of the Treaty. Full implementation of the International Treaty requires substantial financial resources. The Funding Strategy of International Treaty seeks to attract financial resources from all possible sources from governments, both Contracting and non-Contracting Parties, to relevant international mechanisms and funds, and even the private sector, including through a wide range of innovative approaches. The Benefit-sharing Fund is the element of the Funding Strategy that is under the direct control of the Governing Body of the Treaty. The Global Crop Diversity Trust is an essential element of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty in relation to *ex situ* conservation and availability of PGRFA.

13. By its Third Session, the Governing Body had already adopted the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty and its four accompanying annexes. At its Third Session, the Governing Body adopted Annex 4 of the Funding Strategy, *Information and Reporting Requirements under the Funding Strategy*, in order to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of the overall Funding Strategy, including resources not under the direct control of the Governing Body. Information and reporting to the Governing Body will normally be provided every two years.

14. At its Fourth Session, the Governing Body welcomed the information compiled by the Secretariat related to the monitoring of the Funding Strategy, and emphasized the importance of regular provision of such information to raise the profile of the Funding Strategy of the Treaty and to

assess gaps and synergies in its implementation and requests the Secretary to intensify its efforts to compile further information.

15. The GPA is a supporting component of the International Treaty (Article 14). Several provisions of the International Treaty establish linkages between the GPA and the Funding Strategy of the Treaty. Article 13.5 of the International Treaty, for example, links the GPA to the Funding Strategy, where it states that: “*The Contracting Parties recognize that the ability to fully implement the Global Plan of Action [...] will depend largely upon the effective implementation of this Article and of the Funding Strategy as provided in Article 18*”.

16. The Second GPA, in its section on implementation and financing, also recognized that “*through the monitoring of the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty, the Governing Body will be able to monitor resources available for the implementation of the Second GPA*”. The Working Group may wish to emphasize the importance of the monitoring of the Funding Strategy carried out by the Governing Body of the International Treaty and take note of the reporting requirements and periodicity adopted through *Annex 4* of the Funding Strategy, to enhance synergies and avoid duplications with the monitoring of the implementation of the Second GPA.

IV. THE BENEFIT SHARING FUND

17. The Benefit-sharing Fund of the International Treaty became operational in 2009. In that year, the Governing Body welcomed the *Strategic Plan for the implementation of the Benefit-sharing Fund of Funding Strategy* as a basis for resource mobilization by the Secretariat and Contracting Parties. The launching of the first Call for Proposals and the subsequent approval of 11 pilot projects also in 2009 gave significant impetus to the further implementation of the Benefit-sharing Fund, and to the Treaty as a whole.

18. The second Call for Proposals, with its thematic focus on climate change, enhanced the interest in the Benefit-sharing Fund from a wide range of stakeholders, donors and global institutions. The funds disbursed in the second round of the project cycle multiplied per ten those disbursed in the first round of the project cycle (from 543,000 USD in the first cycle to 5,497,723 USD in the second cycle). There are more than 100 organizations involved in the execution of the second round of the project cycle in more than 36 countries. Projects funded are reaching communities facing food insecurity because of the impact of climate change on the use and conservation of their plant genetic diversity.

19. Since 2009, experience has been gained on the running of the project cycle of the Benefit-sharing Fund, especially through the execution of the second round of the project cycle. The Governing Body has recently adopted procedures for disbursement and for monitoring, reporting and evaluation. The Panel of Experts for the second round developed a transparent and clear protocol for the appraisal of project proposals which ensured that exclusively quality and technical merit determine the appraisal and approval of project proposals. A wide range of tools, such as the Helpdesk for the formulation of project proposals or guidelines for preparation of project proposals, have been developed to facilitate the work of applicant institutions and the management of each step of the project cycle.

20. The experience gained in the first two project cycles is being used by the Governing Body of the Treaty and its subsidiary bodies to further enhance the operations of the Benefit-sharing Fund. The *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on the Funding Strategy (ACFS) has recently finalized a *Report on lessons learned* from the first and second rounds of the project cycle. Such Report will be used by the Governing Body to review and improve the Operational Procedures of the Benefit-sharing Fund and to adopt a programmatic approach for the medium term. The *Report on lessons learned* may provide relevant background information to the Commission in its further development of the funding schemes for Animal Genetic Resources.

21. The lessons learned will also be used in programming the third round of the Benefit-sharing Fund. The ACFS has already provided guidance to the Secretariat on how to develop the third Call for Proposals that will most likely be opened in 2013. The third Call for Proposals will continue the

thematic focus on supporting food security by enhancing farmers' capacity to adapt to climate change, through a series of high-impact activities on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. The third Call for Proposals will feature a new Window on technology transfer and related capacity building. There will also be again a Window on Immediate Impact Projects that will be focusing on the deployment, management and sustainable use of crop diversity on-farm.

22. There are strong linkages between the Benefit-sharing Fund and the rolling GPA. Within the priority areas of the Second GPA, the Governing Body focuses on achieving benefits through the Benefit-sharing Fund, in a stage process, in the pressing priority areas, identified for a limited period of time. The Second GPA will be important in the identification of future priorities for funding by the Benefit-sharing Fund. At the same time, the Second GPA recognizes the Benefit-sharing Fund as a relevant element of the Funding Strategy that will support its implementation. The Benefit-sharing Fund has currently three priorities: (1) information exchange, technology transfer and capacity-building; (2) managing and conserving plant genetic resources on farm; (3) the sustainable use of plant genetic resources. These priorities mainly reflect the priorities 2, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 17 of the Second GPA but in addition the Benefit-sharing Fund is also contributing to address other priorities such as 1, 3, 4, 11, 12, 14 or 18.

23. The linkages between the operation of the Benefit-sharing Fund and the GPA are relevant in the context of further discussions by the Commission and its Working Group with regard to facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Second GPA. There are a number of areas where the Commission and the Governing Body will have to ensure mutual supportiveness and avoid fragmentation of efforts, such as in future work on on-farm management.

V. COMPLIANCE

24. Compliance to the provisions of the International Treaty is dealt through its Article 21. At its Fourth Session, the Governing Body adopted procedures and operational mechanisms to promote compliance and address issues of non-compliance through Resolution 2/2011. The Compliance Committee is the institutional mechanism established by the Governing Body to deal with these issues. The Governing Body decided that the Committee shall "develop a succinct standard reporting format for approval by the Governing Body at its Fifth Session, taking into account harmony with other relevant reporting processes, such as those under the Commission".

25. The Procedures and Operational Mechanisms specify, in its Section V on Monitoring and Reporting, that "each Contracting Party is to submit to the Committee, through the Secretary, a report on the measures it has taken to implement its obligations under the International Treaty in one of the six languages of the United Nations. The first report is to be submitted three years after the approval by the Governing Body of a standard reporting format, developed by the Committee. Subsequent reports are to be submitted every five years thereafter or periodically in accordance with any further decisions of the Governing Body on the submission of such reports."

26. The Working Group may wish to emphasize the importance of the monitoring and reporting in the context of compliance to the relevant provisions of the Treaty and take note of the reporting requirements and periodicity adopted through *Procedures and Operational Mechanisms to promote compliance and address issues of non-compliance*, in order to enhance synergies and avoid duplications with the monitoring of the implementation of the Second GPA. Taking into account that most members of the Commission are also Contracting Parties to the International Treaty, any measures to limit the reporting burden on these countries should be foreseen in planning future reporting processes.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM ON PGRFA

27. Article 17 of the International Treaty states that "Contracting Parties shall cooperate to develop and strengthen a global information system to facilitate the exchange of information, based on

existing information systems, on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture".

28. The large number of ongoing initiatives, their diverse nature and scope, and the variety of stakeholders involved, require the establishment of strategic partnerships to allow them to collaborate and provide more effective and coordinated support to plant breeding, and to the implementation of the Multilateral System.

29. In order to facilitate progress in the development of the Global Information System foreseen in Article 17, the Secretariat is establishing strategic partnerships and participates in the development of information systems and tools, under the guidance of the Governing Body. Some of the major activities are:

- Research on stakeholders and users' needs;
- Creation of inventories and databases on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- Development of linkages with the Convention on Biological Diversity's Clearing House Mechanism, the Genesys portal, the World Information Sharing Mechanism for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, Eurisco, Grin-Global and other relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

VII. INFORMATION TOOLS IN SUPPORT OF THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

30. The Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing started operating in January 2007. Since then, the Secretariat has developed a set of voluntary information technology tools for SMTA users. In order to facilitate SMTA provider's reporting obligations, the Secretariat developed and published in November 2010 an information system that allowed the online reporting at accession level for all Annex 1 crops. That first version of the system was designed for the main purpose of implementing the Procedures for the Operation of the Third Party Beneficiary and it was presented at a side event during the Fourth Session of the Governing Body. Since then, the experience accumulated by the Secretariat of the International Treaty in assisting with the reporting process and the numerous requests and suggestions received from organizations and individual users, have led to releasing the second version of the System in May 2012.

31. The new system operates under the name of Easy-SMTA and is of voluntary use at <http://mls.planttreaty.org>. It combines SMTA generation and reporting functions. The user may decide to use the generation and reporting tools separately. The System has a new design and workflow that guides users in a step-by-step process that is intuitive and easy-to-use. It also offers several additional functions such as the uploading spreadsheet files with listing the Annex 1 material being transferred.

32. The Secretariat is also working on the development of customized agreed procedures for the transmission of large amounts of data by using standardized data exchange protocols (e.g. XML). The Secretariat has produced a set of training materials in the form of presentations that are available in six languages and a detail manual for users.