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# COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

## Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda

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

#### Tenth Session

22–24 June 2021

### POSSIBLE RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION'S FUTURE INTERSESSIONAL WORK

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), at its Seventeenth Regular Session, requested the Secretary “to prepare an options paper setting out different options (and their financial implications) for the future organization of the Commission’s intersessional work, for consideration by the Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups (Working Groups) and the Commission at their next sessions, to:

- i. “address in a coherent, integrated and consistent way biodiversity for food and agriculture, including micro-organism and invertebrate genetic resources; and
- ii. consider how to enhance coordination and communication among the Commission’s Working Groups, to raise awareness on subsectoral issues and strengthen coherence on cross-sectoral matters to effectively address the Commission’s mission and goals.”

2. In adopting the Work Plan for the Sustainable Use and Conservation of Micro-organism and Invertebrate Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture,<sup>1</sup> the Commission also requested FAO to present options with respect to the specifics of the Commission’s work on micro-organism and invertebrate genetic resources (MIGR) foreseen for its Nineteenth and Twentieth Regular Sessions, for discussion at its next session.<sup>2</sup>

3. This document gives a brief overview of the current organization of the Commission’s intersessional work. It describes the challenges the Commission’s intersessional work faces, and presents options for addressing these challenges, noting *inter alia* their financial, administrative and human-resource implications.

## II. CURRENT ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION’S INTERSESSIONAL WORK

4. In 1995, in response to Resolution 3/95 through which the FAO Conference agreed to broaden the mandate of the then Commission on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture “to cover all components of biodiversity for food and agriculture”, the FAO Council adopted the Commission’s Statutes. According to the Statutes, the Commission shall have a coordinating role and shall deal with policy, sectoral and cross-sectoral matters related to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture.<sup>3</sup>

5. Since 1995, the Commission’s intersessional work has increasingly been shaped by: (i) its Working Groups and its other subsidiary bodies; (ii) the National Focal Points/National Coordinators; (iii) submissions from Members and observers; and (iv) the Bureau, which, since 2007, has played a very active role in guiding the preparation of the Commission’s sessions.

### Subsidiary bodies

6. The Council, in adopting the Commission’s Statutes in 1995, introduced two important enabling clauses that, to this day, play a key role in the Commission’s intersessional work. It authorized the Commission to establish:

- “intergovernmental technical sectoral working groups ("Sectoral Working Groups"), with appropriate geographical balance, to assist it in the areas of plant, animal, forestry and fisheries genetic resources;”<sup>4</sup> and
- “such other subsidiary bodies as it may deem necessary for the effective discharge of its functions.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CGRFA-17/19/Report, *Appendix E*.

<sup>2</sup> CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 95.

<sup>3</sup> Statutes of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, section 2.

<sup>4</sup> Statutes of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, section 4.

<sup>5</sup> Statutes of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, section 5.

7. In 1997, the Commission established two Working Groups, one for animal genetic resources for food and agriculture (AnGR) and one for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGR).<sup>6</sup> In 2009, the Commission established a Working Group on forest genetic resources (FGR)<sup>7</sup> and in 2015 an Ad Hoc Working Group on aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture (AqGR),<sup>8</sup> which in 2019 became a regular Working Group.<sup>9</sup>

8. In 1999, the Commission established a Contact Group to advance negotiations on the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, which – in 2001 – led to the adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Treaty).<sup>10</sup> In the context of the Treaty negotiations, the Commission convened six extraordinary sessions, six intersessional meetings of its Contact Group, and one meeting of an open-ended working group as well as numerous informal consultations.

9. In 2011, the Commission established an Ad Hoc Technical Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture,<sup>11</sup> which was replaced two years later by the Team of Technical and Legal Experts on Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS Expert Team), a smaller group consisting of two experts from each region.<sup>12</sup>

10. Occasionally, the Commission has also sought advice from less formal groups, such as the Group of National Focal Points for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, which was established on an *ad hoc* basis in 2017 to review the needs and actions identified in the course of the preparation of *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* (SoW-BFA), and the Expert Group on Micro-organism and Invertebrate Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, established in 2017 to review the draft explanatory notes to the ABS Elements.<sup>13</sup>

11. The Working Groups play a key role in preparing and reviewing deliverables related to their respective sectors. Without the work of its Working Groups and other subsidiary bodies, many of the Commission's achievements over the last two decades would not have been possible. Any re-organization of the Commission's intersessional work should therefore strengthen the involvement of the Working Groups. At the same time, the work of the Working Groups needs to reflect the relevance of many topics the Commission deals with to all sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA) and therefore facilitate and improve intersectoral dialogue on those matters.

### **National Focal Points**

12. The National Focal Points for the Commission and for biodiversity and plant, animal, forest and aquatic genetic resources are nominated by governments. With the exception of the National Focal Points for the Commission, most of them were originally nominated to coordinate country reports for the sectoral *State of the World* reports, although many of them have taken on multiple additional tasks in the meanwhile. They often play a crucial role in the implementation of the Commission's action plans and in monitoring their implementation.

13. Notwithstanding the important role of all National Focal Points in the preparation of country reports and policy instruments and in monitoring and reporting, the Commission has formally adopted terms of reference only for the National Focal Points for the Commission.<sup>14</sup> Formally adopted terms of reference for the National Focal Points for aquatic, forest, plant genetic resources, and biodiversity for food and agriculture, and for the National Coordinators for animal genetic resources do not exist yet.

<sup>6</sup> CGRFA-7/97/REP, paragraph 10.

<sup>7</sup> CGRFA-12/09/Report, paragraph 55.

<sup>8</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, paragraph 63.

<sup>9</sup> CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 51.

<sup>10</sup> CGRFA-8/99/Rep, paragraph 7.

<sup>11</sup> CGRFA-13/11/Report, paragraph 60.

<sup>12</sup> CGRFA-14/13/Report, paragraph 40.

<sup>13</sup> CGRFA-16/17/Report Rev.1, paragraphs 17–18, 25.

<sup>14</sup> CGRFA-15/15/Report, *Appendix H*.

### **Submissions by Members and observers**

14. On various occasions, the Commission has invited Members and observers to submit, in writing, information and comments for its consideration and for consideration by its subsidiary bodies. Intersessional submissions by Members and observers have helped to inform intersessional consultations and allowed the Secretariat to take Members' and observers' views into account in the preparation of the Commission's sessions. While this process has proved useful for informing the preparation of pre-session documentation, it is one-way communication. Additional and alternative ways and means of facilitating more interactive consultations during intersessional periods could therefore be considered.

### **Bureau**

15. In agreeing, in 2007, to adopt its own Rules of Procedure, the Commission also requested its Bureau "to play an active role in preparing for the next Session."<sup>15</sup> Since then, the Bureau has played an active role in the preparation of the Commission's sessions, including in the preparation of sessions of the Commission's subsidiary bodies. The Bureau is consulted on the provisional agenda of the sessions and it receives, during intersessional meetings, detailed reports on the status of preparation of the sessions, including the sessions of the Working Groups, which Bureau Members usually pass on to the other Members of their region, to keep them informed.

## **III. CHALLENGES FOR THE COMMISSION'S INTERSESSIONAL WORK**

16. The Commission faces several challenges with regard to its intersessional work: (i) it has neither a specialized forum to consider MIGR nor an intersessional forum to address the totality of biodiversity for food and agriculture (BFA); (ii) communication and interaction between the Working Groups responsible for the different sectors are limited; (iii) there is a paucity of communication among National Focal Points within and across sectors, despite the fact that exchange of information and experiences among National Focal Points is essential in order to improve the implementation and uptake of the Commission's instruments; and (iv) the Commission needs to interface more effectively with FAO's other work on biodiversity, including on the *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors*<sup>16</sup>, to allow the implementation of Commission instruments to benefit from it.

### **Lack of intersessional fora addressing biodiversity and micro-organism/invertebrate genetic resources for food and agriculture**

17. The finalization of the SoW-BFA and the anticipated agreement on a policy response to its findings raise the question of whether the Commission should adjust its governance structures in the light of these developments, for example by establishing another subsidiary body specifically addressing BFA. Similarly, the Commission's continued interest in MIGR, as evidenced by its recently adopted Work Plan for the Sustainable Use and Conservation of Micro-organism and Invertebrate Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture,<sup>17</sup> raises the further question of whether a subsidiary body should also be established to advise the Commission on future work in this "sector".

18. While the Commission would follow customary practice with the establishment of new intergovernmental technical working groups for these "sectors", both, BFA and MIGR are characterized by features that distinguish them markedly from the sectors covered by the existing Working Groups.

- BFA cuts across all sectors within the mandate of the Commission; it includes the diversity of plants, animals and micro-organisms at genetic, species and ecosystem levels, present *in* and *around* crop, livestock, forest and aquatic production systems. Similarly MIGR play a key role for all GRFA that fall within the remits of existing Working Groups.

<sup>15</sup> CGRFA-11/07/Report, paragraph 100.

<sup>16</sup> CL 163/REP, paragraph 10g; FAO. 2020. *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors*. Rome.

<sup>17</sup> CGRFA-17/19/Report, *Appendix E*.

- The intersectoral nature of both BFA and MIGR thus requires a wider range of expertise than it may be reasonable to expect from a country delegation. A subsidiary body responsible for both or even just one of these “sectors” might therefore face the problem that its delegates do not possess the expertise required to address all aspects of its mandate.

19. Given the mandates of the existing Working Groups and the need to avoid overlaps with and duplication of their work, the establishment of dedicated Working Groups for BFA and/or MIGR would require clear definitions of their mandates. However, the cross-sectoral nature of both “sectors” and the wide range of organisms covered by them could ultimately speak against the establishment of working groups for BFA and MIGR that function like the existing ones.

#### **Lack of regular communication and interaction between the different sectors**

20. Over recent biennia, the Commission’s Working Groups have received an increasing number of requests to consider cross-sectoral matters. The Working Groups have considered, *inter alia*, the implications of access and benefit-sharing for the use and exchange of genetic resources in their sectors, digital sequence information, the role of genetic resources in mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, and the application of biotechnologies.

21. However, the current format of intersessional meetings, under which the Working Groups are convened at different times, does not allow for intersectoral dialogue between Commission sessions. This, for example, hinders discussion of integrated management approaches to the sustainable use and conservation of BFA and the ecosystem services it provides in the context of production systems and their surroundings.<sup>18</sup>

22. The creation of opportunities for intersectoral dialogue in the periods between the Commission’s sessions is clearly a challenge for its intersessional work. An exceptional occasion when such dialogue was facilitated was the International Workshop on Access and Benefit-sharing for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, held in January 2018 at the Commission’s request. The Commission decided that the Workshop, while being open to all Members of the Commission, observers and relevant stakeholders, should be attended by at least one representative per region of each of the Commission’s Working Groups and, in addition, seven regionally representative experts from the subsectors of MIGR. The Workshop produced important outputs that were subsequently developed by the Working Groups in collaboration with the ABS Expert Team into explanatory notes to the ABS Elements.

#### **Paucity of communication between National Focal Points and lack of terms of reference**

23. The frequency of communication between and among the Commission’s National Focal Points may vary from sector to sector and from country to country. With regard to regular communication between sectoral National Focal Points, currently only the Domestic Animal Diversity Network (DAD-Net) provides an open forum for the discussion of issues relevant to the management of AnGR. DAD-Net was established in 2005, and by 2020 had about 3 300 subscribers worldwide. While most National Focal Points participate in the network, DAD-Net is open to anyone who wishes to join. FAO as the Global Focal Point for AnGR also facilitates communication provides support to countries. The establishment of networks, where they do not exist, or distribution lists for the other sectors could help to improve communication between National Focal Points between the Commission’s sessions. However, sectoral exchange mechanisms do not allow for intersectoral communication.

24. Irrespective of the final decisions the Commission may take with regard to the organization of its intersessional work, it may wish to better recognize and define the role of National Focal Points/Coordinators.

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<sup>18</sup> CGRFA-17/19/13, paragraph 18.

### **Alignment of the Commission's intersessional work with other FAO activities**

25. In 2019, the FAO Council adopted the *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors*.<sup>19</sup> An Action Plan for its implementation is under development.<sup>20</sup> The Strategy aims to mainstream biodiversity across agricultural sectors at national, regional and international levels in a structured and coherent manner, taking into account national priorities, needs, regulations and policies and country programming frameworks. It aims to support countries in reducing the negative impacts of agricultural practices on biodiversity, to promote sustainable agricultural practices and to conserve, enhance, preserve and restore biodiversity as a whole.

26. The *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors* notes that FAO, through established instruments and bodies, including the Commission, already provides a global framework for the conservation and sustainable use of BFA, including genetic resources. The draft Action Plan for its implementation therefore proposes to support the Commission in developing and reaching agreement on new global plans of action and countries in the implementation of agreed global plans of action.<sup>21</sup> It will be important for the Commission to ensure that the Strategy serves as a support mechanism for its work, including its intersessional activities, and for the implementation of the Commission's instruments by countries.

## **IV. OPTIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE COMMISSION'S INTERSESSIONAL WORK**

27. As stressed by the Commission, there is a need to address BFA, including MIGR, in a coherent, integrated and consistent way, and to consider how to enhance coordination and communication among the Commission's Working Groups and National Focal Points/Coordinators in order to raise awareness on subsectoral issues and strengthen coherence on cross-sectoral matters and hence more effectively address the Commission's mission and goals.<sup>22</sup>

### **Strengthening the role of National Focal Points/Coordinators**

28. Adopting Terms of Reference for the National Focal Points for aquatic, forest, plant genetic resources and biodiversity for food and agriculture and the National Coordinators for animal genetic resources may offer an opportunity to strengthen their roles in the Commission's work and to consider how the exchange of information and collaboration between National Focal Points within and across sectors may be improved. Draft Terms of Reference of the National Focal Points for plant, aquatic and forest genetic resources and for biodiversity for food and agriculture and the National Coordinators for animal genetic resources, intended to define and strengthen their roles in the Commission's work, including in the implementation and monitoring of the Commission's instruments, are contained in *Appendix I* to this document.

### **Virtual and hybrid sessions**

29. Based on experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic, holding informal virtual/hybrid consultations or workshops, including briefings convened in preparation of formal meetings, could be considered in the future. Informal virtual or hybrid meetings of National Focal Points/Coordinators could be facilitated by FAO at regional and/or global levels. Furthermore, formal sessions of the Commission's Working Groups and of the Commission itself could be webcast in addition to being held physically at FAO headquarters, which would allow for a higher number of participants to attend these sessions.

### **Re-organization of the Commission's subsidiary bodies**

30. This section briefly presents different options for the re-organization of the Commission's future intersessional work and identifies variations within some of them. These options are provided in order to inspire discussion and do not indicate any preferences for specific options on the part of the

<sup>19</sup> CL 163/REP, paragraph 10g; FAO. 2020. *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors*. Rome.

<sup>20</sup> PC 130/7 Rev.1.

<sup>21</sup> PC 130/7 Rev.1.

<sup>22</sup> CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 97.

Organization or of the Commission Secretariat. Obviously, some elements of some of the options could be combined with other options. An overview of the financial and human-resource implications of each option is given in *Appendix II* to this document.

***Option A:***  
***Status Quo***

31. Given the cross-sectoral nature of BFA and the fact that MIGR play an important role in the management of all the GRFA already covered by existing Working Groups, the Commission could address BFA and MIGR during the intersessional period through its existing Working Groups. BFA and MIGR would thus be treated akin to the cross-sectoral matters on which the Commission often consults its Working Groups. On MIGR-related matters the Commission could decide on a case-by-case basis to consult only relevant Working Groups.

32. If BFA and MIGR became the joint responsibility of the Commission's existing Working Groups, monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of related policy instruments and the preparation and review of country reports and global assessments would likely also fall within their mandates. However, Commission Members did not see a need to consult these Working Groups on the preparation of the SoW-BFA, nor did they seek the Working Groups' views on possible policy responses to the findings of the SoW-BFA. Integrated management approaches for sustainably using BFA and the ecosystem services it provides are highly relevant for all sectors, but, as per their mandate, the Commission's existing Working Groups might not have the necessary expertise to deal comprehensively with these matters.

33. Option A would not require additional financial resources in relation to meetings. However, addressing BFA and MIGR through the existing Working Groups would not be in line with the approach taken by the Commission to the preparation of the SoW-BFA and the development of a policy response to its findings.

***Option B:***  
***Additional Working Group(s) for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture/  
Micro-organism and Invertebrate Genetic Resources***

34. In order to address matters related to BFA and MIGR, the Commission could create a new subsidiary body for each of these topics or one new subsidiary body responsible for both.

35. Under this option, the new subsidiary body or bodies would follow the model of the Commission's Working Groups, with the same number of members, the same geographical balance<sup>23</sup> and the mandate to review the situation and issues related to BFA/MIGR, to advise and make recommendations to the Commission on these matters and to consider the progress made in implementing the Commission's programme of work, as well as any other matters referred to them by the Commission.

***Option B.1: Separate subsidiary bodies for MIGR and BFA***

36. Following previous practice, the Commission could establish two separate bodies, one to deal with BFA and one to deal with MIGR.

***Subsidiary body for MIGR***

37. Given their important role in the provision of ecosystem services and their importance to food and agriculture on the one hand and the lack of attention MIGR receive in relevant policies and decision-making processes on the other, MIGR could clearly benefit in terms of visibility and public awareness from the establishment of a dedicated subsidiary body.

38. However, the sheer number of species, the enormous taxonomic diversity and multiplicity of functions and uses of micro-organism and invertebrate GRFA significantly contrast with plant, animal,

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<sup>23</sup> The Working Groups are composed of 28 Member Nations from the following regions: 5 from Africa; 5 from Europe; 5 from Asia; 5 from Latin America and the Caribbean; 4 from the Near East; 2 from North America; 2 from Southwest Pacific.

forest and aquatic GRFA. The latter encompass fewer species, and the taxonomy of these species tends to be well established. As a result, “sectoral” species, farmed types, breeds and varieties can often be managed and conserved on an individual basis. “Classical” genetic resources management issues (characterization and conservation at the within-species level, genetic improvement, choice of breeds/varieties, etc.) are less well developed for MIGR and for large swathes of them do not exist at all. Technical knowledge gaps are compounded by the fact that MIGR generally tend to be overlooked and neglected.

39. The Commission’s Work Plan for the Sustainable Use and Conservation of Micro-organism and Invertebrate Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture addresses micro-organisms and invertebrates as functional groups: pollinators, in particular honey bees; soil micro-organisms and invertebrates; biological control agents; micro-organisms of relevance to ruminant digestion; and micro-organisms of relevance to food processing and agro-industrial processes. Each of the functional groups requires very specific expertise. Given that, according to the Work Plan, each Session of the Commission will consider a different set of functional groups of MIGR (and possibly follow-up action to the Commission’s findings and last session’s recommendations on other functional groups), a subsidiary body for MIGR would, at each of its meetings, have to reflect a different body of expertise. It is not clear, however, whether the nomination procedure that currently applies to the Working Groups would ensure the presence of the relevant expertise.

*Subsidiary body for BFA*

40. One of the key conclusions of the SoW-BFA is that the sustainable use and conservation of BFA call for approaches in which genetic resources, species and ecosystems are managed in an integrated way in the context of production systems and their surroundings. In particular, for many types of associated biodiversity and wild foods, sustainable use and conservation require *in situ* or on-farm management integrated into strategies at ecosystem or landscape levels.

41. While various bodies of the Organization deal with certain aspects of BFA, the establishment of a subsidiary body for BFA would underline and visibly institutionalize the need to mainstream the sustainable use and conservation of the totality of BFA in the Commission. On the other hand, the creation of a separate subsidiary body for BFA could appear to contradict the need for integrated approaches to the sustainable use and conservation of BFA,.

*Option B.2: Subsidiary body for BFA and MIGR*

42. The Commission could also establish a joint subsidiary body for both, BFA and MIGR. However, a subsidiary body for BFA and MIGR would face the combined challenges separate bodies would face.

43. Option B, including the suboptions, would be likely to perpetuate the “sectorization” of GRFA, rather than respond to the need for integration of BFA across all sectors of GRFA.

***Option C:***

*Subsidiary Body for Integrated Management of Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*

44. Rather than addressing BFA and MIGR through existing Working Groups (Option A) or creating one or two new subsidiary bodies for them (Option B), the Commission could consider establishing a new Subsidiary Body for Integrated Management of BFA (SIM BFA), which would address integration across all components of BFA, including PGR, AnGR, FGR, AqGR and MIGR (Option C.1), as well as consider the progress made in implementing the Commission’s programme of work on BFA and MIGR. In addition, a small expert group could be established to address the functional groups of MIGR and report to the SIM BFA (Option C.2).

*Option C.1: Subsidiary Body for Integrated Management of Biodiversity  
for Food and Agriculture*

45. The SIM BFA would be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the policy response to the SoW-BFA and would focus on integrated approaches that favour sustainable use and conservation of BFA, taking into account the contributions and limitations of each sector of GRFA. In



addition, the Commission could mandate the SIM BFA to consider specific cross-sectoral matters instead of, or in addition to, the Working Groups.

46. The Commission's workshop on access and benefit-sharing held in 2018<sup>24</sup> could serve as a model for the composition of the SIM BFA. In order to reflect the perspectives of all sectors of GRFA and encourage cross-sectoral dialogue, the SIM BFA could be composed of one representative per region of each of the Commission's Working Groups and, in addition, one or two representatives nominated by each region with knowledge on integrated management of BFA, which would bring the total number of members of the SIM BFA to 35 or 42.

*Option C.2: Subsidiary Body for Integrated Management of Biodiversity  
for Food and Agriculture and MIGR Expert Panel*

47. Option C.1 does not provide a dedicated solution for MIGR. The SIM BFA, as provided for Option C.1, could therefore be assisted by a regionally representative MIGR Expert Panel to be nominated by the regions. The composition of the MIGR Expert Panel could be determined on an *ad hoc* basis taking into account the functional group(s) of MIGR the Commission decided to consider at each session.

48. The SIM BFA would assist in the implementation of integrated approaches to the conservation and sustainable use of BFA and facilitate regular dialogue between the different sectors of GRFA.

**Option D:**  
*Joint Subsidiary Body*

49. Facilitating cross-sectoral dialogue between the Commission's Working Groups and creating space for integrating biodiversity across agricultural sectors could, logistics permitting, lead to the creation of a new body that integrates the Working Groups without depriving them of their functional autonomy.

50. Under this scenario, the Working Groups could meet in parallel for two days and come together on the following day for the session of a Joint Subsidiary Body for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (JSB BFA) to consider cross-sectoral matters, including BFA and MIGR. The JSB BFA could also include additional delegates. On day four, each Working Group would consider and adopt its meeting report in the morning. In the afternoon of day four, the JSB BFA would convene to adopt the report of the JSB BFA meeting held on day three. This option would allow intersectoral dialogue and interdisciplinary consideration of matters relevant to all sectors. The subsidiary body would also create an adequate forum for consideration of matters related to BFA and MIGR.

51. However, parallel meetings of the four Working Groups would put an enormous work load on small delegations as well as the Commission Secretariat, which usually supports the secretariats of all the Working Groups in the preparation and servicing of Working Group meetings. Moreover, the availability of meeting rooms, interpreters and translators could become a serious, and possibly unresolvable, challenge.

## **V. PROCEDURE FOR ESTABLISHING SUBSIDIARY BODIES**

52. As noted above, the Commission, according to its Statutes, may establish intergovernmental technical sectoral working groups ("Sectoral Working Groups"), to assist it in the areas of plant, animal, forestry and fisheries genetic resources.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the Commission may establish such other subsidiary bodies as it may deem necessary for the effective discharge of its functions.<sup>26</sup> However, the establishment of any sectoral Working Group or other subsidiary body shall be subject to the determination by the Director-General that the necessary funds are available in the relevant chapter of the budget of the Organization or from extra-budgetary sources and, before taking any decision involving expenditure in connection with the establishment of subsidiary bodies, the

<sup>24</sup> See above, paragraph 22.

<sup>25</sup> Statutes of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, section 3.

<sup>26</sup> Statutes of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, section 5.

Commission shall have before it a report from the Director-General on the programme, the administrative and financial implications thereof.<sup>27</sup> Thus, should the Commission wish to establish an additional subsidiary body, it would have to follow this procedure.

## **VI. GUIDANCE SOUGHT**

53. The Working Group is invited to:
- i. consider the future organization of the Commission's intersessional work, taking into account the options given in this document;
  - ii. provide guidance in its area of expertise on the organization of the Commission's future intersessional work; and
  - iii. review and revise, as appropriate, the Terms of Reference for the National Focal Points/Coordinators contained in *Appendix I* to this document.

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<sup>27</sup> Statutes of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, section 6.

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## APPENDIX I

### DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS FOR PLANT, AQUATIC AND FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES AND FOR BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE AND THE NATIONAL COORDINATORS FOR ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

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The National Focal Points for plant, aquatic and forest genetic resources and for biodiversity for food and agriculture and the National Coordinators for animal genetic resources serve as national contact persons for communication with FAO and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) with regard to work on the respective genetic resources or components of biodiversity. They play a coordinating role at national level, including with regard to the preparation of inputs to the Commission's global assessments and, as appropriate, the implementation and monitoring of global plans of action and other relevant instruments.

The tasks of National Focal Points and National Coordinators include:

- responding to requests from the Commission and suggestions by the Commission's subsidiary bodies and FAO, including, as appropriate, by coordinating joint responses from relevant stakeholders at national level;
- coordinating the preparation of national inputs to the Commission's global assessments (country reports);
- supporting and facilitating national implementation of global plans of action and other relevant instruments, as appropriate, at technical and policy level, including, as appropriate, the development or review of national strategy and action plans and other relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral policies and programmes and the establishment or strengthening of national stakeholder networks;
- coordinating the preparation of national inputs to the monitoring of the implementation of global plans of action and other relevant instruments, as appropriate;
- coordinating, as appropriate, the collection and management of national data on relevant genetic resources and components of biodiversity (including data relevant to the monitoring of relevant Sustainable Development Goal targets) and the reporting and management of these data at global level via appropriate information systems;
- coordinating national preparation for meetings of relevant subsidiary bodies of the Commission, as appropriate, including by ensuring that relevant stakeholders (ministry officials, technical experts, producers' organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities, etc.) are informed in good time of the dates and agendas of these meetings, that relevant inputs are obtained from these stakeholders and that any necessary stakeholder consultations are organized;
- coordinating, as appropriate, the identification of experts and stakeholders to participate in meetings, consultations and assessment processes initiated by the Commission, its subsidiary bodies or FAO;
- providing support to the Bureaus of relevant subsidiary bodies of the Commission to ensure effective two-way communication between national and the regional levels;
- strengthening links with the country's national focal point for the Commission and other national focal points/national coordinators to promote interagency and cross-sectoral communication and collaboration;
- collaborating, as appropriate, with national focal points and national coordinators in other countries, and regional focal points and networks where established, to facilitate sectoral and cross-sectoral work, including particularly the work of the Commission and the implementation of instruments developed by the Commission; and
- supporting and facilitating, as appropriate, the preparation of communication materials on relevant genetic resources and components of biodiversity and their contributions to food security and rural development, for relevant stakeholders, including government officials, producers, the media and the general public.

## APPENDIX II

**OPTIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION'S INTERSESSIONAL  
WORK: FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

## MEETING COSTS (UNITS)

		Option A	Option B.1	Option B.2	Option C.1	Option C.2	Option D
	<b>Working Group session</b>	<b>No new body</b>	<b>2 WG-style new bodies (BFA/MIGR)</b>	<b>1 WG-style new body (BFA&amp;MIGR)</b>	<b>1 new body (SIM BFA)</b>	<b>1 new body (SIM BFA) &amp; MIGR Experts</b>	<b>1 new body (JSB IM BFA)</b>
Interpretation in 6 languages	5 sessions	4*5 sessions	6*5 sessions	5*5 sessions	5*5 sessions	5*5 sessions	2,5*4 sessions+3 sessions
Meeting rooms, messengers, technicians, overtime, security	3 days	4*3 days	6*3 days	5*3 days	5*3 days	5*3 days	4 days
Translation of WG documents & report			Each new body will require the preparation of additional documents and an additional report.				

## HUMAN RESOURCES (units)

	Option A	Option B.1	Option B.2	Option C.1	Option C.2	Option D
	<b>No new body</b>	<b>2 WG-style new bodies (BFA/MIGR)</b>	<b>1 WG-style new body (BFA&amp;MIGR)</b>	<b>1 new body (SIM BFA)</b>	<b>1 new body (SIM BFA) &amp; MIGR Experts</b>	<b>1 new body (JB IM BFA)</b>
Secretariat (P-4/ biennium)	-	1 new post	1 new post	1 new post	1 new post	1 new post

## NUMBER OF MEMBERS

	Option A	Option B.1	Option B.2	Option C.1	Option C.2	Option D
	<b>Working Group</b>	<b>No new body: 4 WGs</b>	<b>2 WG-style new bodies (BFA/MIGR)</b>	<b>1 WG-style new body (BFA&amp;MIGR)</b>	<b>1 new body (SIM BFA) &amp; MIGR Experts</b>	<b>1 new body (JSB BFA)</b>
Groups	1	4	6	5	5	5
Total number of Members, incl. Members of existing WGs	28	112	168	140	140 (112+28)	147 (112+28+7)