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CGRFA-7/97/3

March 1997

منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة

联合国粮食及农业组织

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture

Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Seventh Session

Rome, 15-23 May 1997

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Introduction

1. Since 1991, the Commission has considered progress reports on its Global System at all its regular sessions. This document gives particular attention to ongoing efforts to strengthen and adjust the Global System, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as requested by Agenda 21, and in line with Resolution 3 of the Convention's Nairobi Final Act.

Background

2. From its establishment, by the 1983 FAO Conference, as the first permanent inter-governmental forum in the United Nations system dealing with an important part of biological diversity, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture,[1] has coordinated, overseen and monitored the development of a Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Its terms of reference, as revised by the FAO Council in 1995 (Resolution CL 1/110),[2] specify that one of the tasks of the Commission is "to recommend such measures as may be necessary or desirable to ensure the development, as appropriate, of a comprehensive global system or systems on genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture and to monitor the operation of its/their components, in harmony, where applicable, with the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant international instruments".

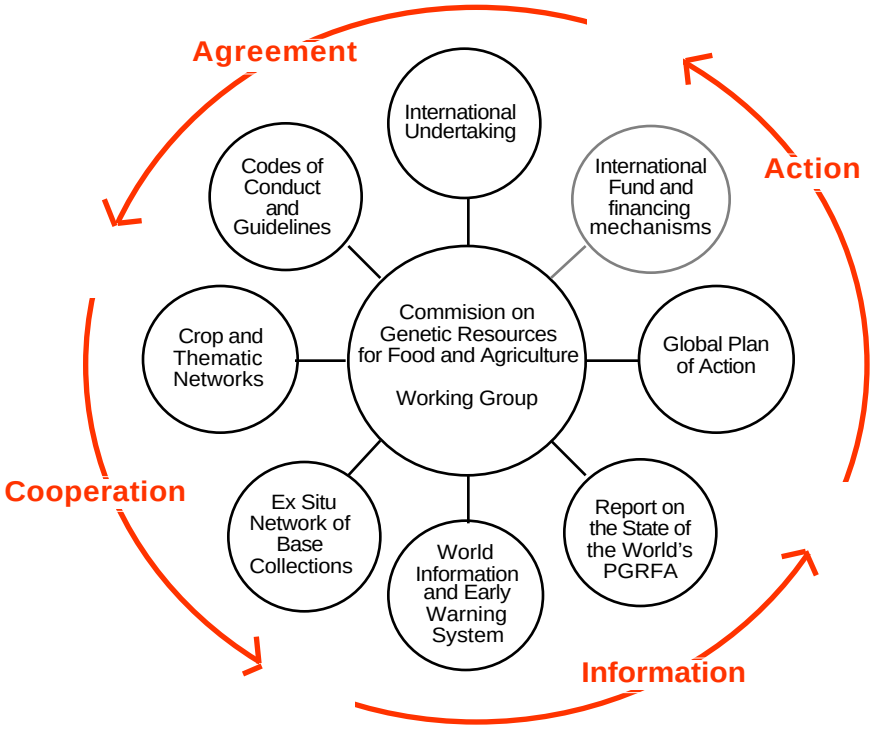
3. The objectives of the Global System are to ensure the safe conservation and promote the availability and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources, for present and future generations, by providing a flexible framework for sharing the benefits and burdens. The System covers both the conservation of plant genetic resources (*ex situ* and *in situ*, including on-farm) and their sustainable utilization.

4. A total of 171 countries and the European Community now participate in the Global System (see *Appendix 1*).

The Global System and the Convention on Biological Diversity

5. One task of the Commission, stated in its terms of reference is "to facilitate and oversee cooperation between FAO and ... in particular with the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, and to seek to develop appropriate mechanisms for cooperation and coordination in consultation with such bodies". The terms of reference also provide for the Commission, "subject to approval by the Governing Bodies of FAO, as appropriate, to respond to requests from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in the specific area of genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture, [...] in particular, and as appropriate, through the Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture".

THE GLOBAL SYSTEM
ON THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION
OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



6. Since the Commission's last regular Session, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CoP/CBD) has held its Second and Third Meetings. The Second CoP, in November 1995, considered a report on the FAO Global System, and adopted Decision II/15, *FAO Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, which recognized "the special nature of agricultural biodiversity, its distinctive features and problems needing distinctive solutions", and declared its support for the processes underway: the revision of the International Undertaking, in harmony with the Convention, and the preparation of the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources (*Appendix 2*).

7. FAO again reported to the Third CoP, in November 1996,[3] on progress under the FAO Global System, including on the outcome of the International Technical Conference, held in Leipzig in 1996. As the CoP had requested, the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* and the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, finalized by the Leipzig Conference, were also made available.

8. The Third CoP considered agricultural biological diversity as a major agenda item, and made important recommendations of direct relevance to the work of the Commission and the Global System, in Decision III/11, *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Agricultural Biological Diversity*.[4] The Decision *inter alia* calls for the strengthening of the FAO Global System. It "recognizes that several issues require further work in the context of the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in particular: financing; the realization of Farmers' Rights as discussed in the Global Plan of Action; as well as terms of technology transfer to developing countries and access and benefit-

sharing arrangements, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Convention". These matters, and other matters of interest to the Global System arising from the Decision, are discussed below in more detail under the relevant elements of the Global System.

9. The Decision also "*welcomes* the offer by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to continue serving countries in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in the area of agricultural biological diversity and, referring to its earlier decisions, underlines the necessity of avoiding any duplication of work with respect to the activities being undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in this programme of work".

10. Cooperation between the FAO and the CBD Secretariat is being strengthened, particularly in the light of the Third CoP's decision to establish a multi-year programme of activities on agricultural biological diversity. From 1997, FAO has seconded a full-time professional officer to the Convention Secretariat, with special responsibility for agricultural biological diversity and development of a joint programme of work. A Letter of Agreement between FAO and the CBD Secretariat is under negotiation.

The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

11. The Commission is a permanent inter-governmental forum, where countries that are donors and users of germplasm, funds and technology can discuss, on an equal footing, matters related to genetic resources for food and agriculture, and can monitor the implementation of the principles contained in the Undertaking. The Commission aims to reach international consensus in areas of global interest. Relevant technical assistance agencies, inter-governmental organizations, development banks, non-governmental organizations and private foundations also attend the sessions of the Commission and report to it on their programmes and activities on genetic resources for food and agriculture.

12. In 1985, the Commission established a subsidiary inter-governmental Working Group to "consider the progress made in implementing the Commission's programme of work and in other matters referred to it by the Commission".

Progress since the Sixth Session and matters for consideration

13. Between June 1995 and March 1997, a further twenty countries joined the Commission (Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Georgia, Jamaica, Malawi, Mongolia, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Swaziland, Tonga and Vietnam) bringing membership to 151 (including the European Community).

14. During this period, the Commission held two further extraordinary sessions; the Second Extraordinary Session in April 1996, to act as an inter-governmental preparatory committee for the Fourth International Technical Conference (Leipzig, June 1996), and the Third Extraordinary Session in December 1996, to further negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking.[5] The Working Group held its Eleventh Session in December 1996, preceding the Commission's Third Extraordinary Session.[6]

15. In November 1995, the FAO Conference adopted Resolution 3/95, broadening the Commission's mandate to cover all components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture, and changing its name to the "Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture". Conference considered that this "would facilitate an integrated approach to agrobiodiversity and coordination with governments, which are increasingly dealing with policy issues regarding biological diversity in an integrated manner". The new statutes of the Commission provide for cooperation between FAO and other international governmental and

non-governmental bodies, in particular the CoP/CBD. The Conference agreed that the broadening of the mandate should be implemented on a step-by-step basis, beginning with farm animal genetic resources, and progressively extending to other sectors of food and agriculture, and that the broadening should not interfere with the ongoing negotiations for the revision of the Undertaking. Actions to be taken on farm-animal and forest genetic resources were discussed by COAG in April 1997 and COFO in March 1997: their recommendations are presented to the Commission as information documents.[7]

16. The statutes of the broadened Commission state that it may establish inter-governmental sectoral technical working groups to assist it in the areas of plant, animal, forestry and fisheries genetic resources. Draft terms of reference for the possible establishment of a sectoral working group on animal genetic resources and the transformation of the current Working Group into a sectoral working group on plant genetic resources will be discussed under Agenda item 3.

17. Twenty-three international organizations submitted reports on their policies, programmes and activities in the field of plant genetic resources to the Sixth Session: these and a further thirty organizations have been invited to report to the current session. In line with the Commission's broadened mandate, their reports to this session will, for the first time, cover all genetic resources of importance to food and agriculture. Reports received[8] will be considered under agenda item 6.

Revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

18. The International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources was adopted by Resolution 8/83 of the 1983 FAO Conference, and interpreted and complemented by three Conference Resolutions (4/89, 5/89 and 3/91).

19. The Twenty-seventh Session of the FAO Conference in 1993 unanimously adopted Resolution 7/93, in response to the requests made in Agenda 21 and the Final Act of the Nairobi Conference which adopted the CBD, which requested FAO to provide a forum for negotiations among governments, through regular and extraordinary sessions of the Commission:[9]

> "for the adaptation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity;[10]
>
> for consideration of the issue of access on mutually agreed terms to plant genetic resources, including *ex situ* collections not addressed by the Convention;[11] as well as
>
> for the issue of realization of Farmers' Rights".

20. Negotiations began at the Commission's First Extraordinary Session (7-11 November 1994), and continued during the Sixth Regular Session (19-30 June 1995).

Progress since the Sixth Session and matters for consideration

21. The 150 countries that attended the Fourth International Technical Conference, in adopting the *Leipzig Declaration*, emphasized the importance of completing the revision of the Undertaking and the adjustment of the Global System, in line with the CBD.

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7 CGRFA-7/97/Inf. 2 and CGRFA-7/97/Inf. 3.

8 CGRFA-7/97/7.

9 While still the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources.

10 While the Convention on Biological Diversity covers all kinds of biological diversity, the scope of the

22. Progress was reported to the Second and Third Meetings of the CoP/CBD. The Second CoP declared its support for this process, through Decision II/15 (*Appendix 2*). Decision III/11 calls for the effective and speedy completion of the revision of the International Undertaking, and "notes that the various options for the legal status of a revised International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, which include a voluntary agreement, binding agreement, or protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity, have not been decided upon by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, requests the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to inform the Conference of the Parties of its deliberations, affirms its willingness to consider a decision by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations that the International Undertaking should take the form of a protocol to this Convention once revised in harmony with this Convention and further requests the Executive Secretary to inform the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture accordingly". The Commission was so informed at its Third Extraordinary Session.

23. The Third Extraordinary Session (9-13 December 1996) was devoted to the continuation of negotiations. A Fourth Negotiating Draft (document CGRFA/IUND/4), which includes the proposals made by Commission Members at that session, will be considered by the present Session under item 8. At the request of the Third Extraordinary Session, FAO invited members to make further submissions regarding the Negotiating Draft, by a *Note Verbale* of 24 February 1997: any submissions received will be made available as document CGRFA/IUND/4 Add. 1. As requested, IPGRI and FAO have also prepared, through a process of consultation with members, a characterization and notional assessment of the "pros and cons" of various options for access and benefit-sharing, to assist in the negotiations (document CGRFA-7/97/9).

The International Fund and other funding mechanisms for plant genetic resources

24. The FAO Conference in 1991 adopted Resolution 3/91, stating "that Farmers' Rights will be implemented through an international fund on plant genetic resources, which will support plant genetic conservation and utilization programmes", and agreeing that the "resources for the international fund as well as for other funding mechanisms should be substantial, sustainable and based on the principles of equity and transparency", and "that through the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, the donors of genetic resources, funds and technology will determine and oversee the policies, programmes and priorities of the fund and other funding mechanisms, with the advice of the appropriate bodies". It has also been noted that funding could take the form of a window of an existing fund.

25. The Fourth Session of the Commission "*agreed* that the practical expression of Farmers' Rights, through the International Fund, and a scientifically well-founded Global Plan of Action, would make it possible to consolidate the Global System and achieve its objectives". It also agreed that the *Plan*'s priority programmes and projects should be financed through the International Fund.

26. The Sixth Session, in deciding that the *Global Plan of Action* should include "cost estimates, identification of possible sources of financial resources, and priorities and criteria for the allocation of resources", recalled its recommendation, at its Fourth Session, "that the Technical Conference be followed by a meeting to define the financial commitments needed for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*, and the terms and conditions of financing."

Progress since the Sixth Session and matters for consideration

27. The *Global Plan of Action* has now been adopted by the International Technical Conference, which noted the *Plan*'s "estimate of the cost of implementing the *Global Plan of Action*, and of its identification of existing sources of financing and of possible new sources of financing". Given the changes introduced by the Conference in many of the priority activities

28. The fund has not yet been established, and matters related to legal status, policies and priorities are now under discussion, as part of the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking, and, in particular, the realization of Farmers' Rights (Agenda Item 8).

The Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources

29. In 1991, the Commission requested the development of a rolling *Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, with programmes and activities aimed at filling in gaps, overcoming constraints and facing emergency situations identified in the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*. The periodically updated *Plan* would permit the Commission to recommend priorities and promote the rationalization and coordination of efforts.

30. The Commission agreed that the *Plan* was "to be financed, on a step by step basis, through the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources, and to be implemented by appropriate agencies and organizations, under the supervision of the Commission". In 1993, the Fifth Session of the Commission considered that "by financing the *Plan*, through the International Fund and other funding mechanisms, as foreseen in Resolution 3/91, the international community would contribute to the practical realization of Farmers' Rights".

Progress since the Sixth Session and matters for consideration

31. The first *Global Plan of Action* was developed under the guidance of the Commission, through the country-driven preparatory process of the Fourth International Technical Conference: the Second CoP described the process as "exemplary" and "an innovative model". At twelve regional and sub-regional meetings, governments discussed regional problems and opportunities and made recommendations for the *Plan*, which helped catalyze the formation of, and strengthen national programmes and regional networks and promote scientific cooperation. The *Plan*, as adopted by the International Technical Conference, comprises twenty priority activities, covering *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, plant genetic resources utilization and institutions and capacity-building. The rolling *Plan* will be reviewed and updated after four years. In the *Leipzig Declaration*,[12] governments committed themselves to taking the necessary steps to implement the *Global Plan of Action.*

32. The International Technical Conference stressed the need to enlist the widest possible participation in its implementation and requested that the outcome of the Conference be reported to a wide range of forums dealing with food and agriculture and biodiversity, including the CoP. The FAO Council, in endorsing the outcome of the International Technical Conference,[13] invited national, regional and international funding organizations to consider the priorities of the *Global Plan of Action* as policy guidance for their funding programmes. FAO is inviting financial and funding organizations to examine ways and means of supporting its implementation and is itself examining the possible role of its technical programmes.

33. Decision III/11 of the Third CoP "welcomes the contribution that the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, as adopted by the fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, provides to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the field of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and encourages Parties actively to implement the Global Plan of Action, in accordance with their national capacities, and endorses its priorities and policy recommendations". It also "*encourages* Parties to develop national strategies, programmes and plans, which should focus on, *inter alia* [...] the key elements of the Global Plan of Action".

34. The Decision also "*draws the attention* of international funding agencies to the urgent need to support the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity important to agriculture and invites these agencies to provide information and feedback in this respect to the Conference of the Parties and in this context, requests the interim financial mechanism to give priority to supporting efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity important to agriculture".

35. The International Technical Conference agreed that the *Global Plan of Action* should be implemented as an integral part of the Global System, and in harmony with the CBD, and that governments would monitor and guide overall progress, through the Commission. Document CGRFA-6/97/5, which will be considered under item 5, is intended to facilitate the Commission's work in this regard.

The *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*

36. In 1989, the Commission "*recommended* that the Secretariat should periodically prepare a report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, with the cooperation of other bodies concerned. The report should analyze the current plant genetic resources situation, and describe activities and programmes being carried out by regional, international and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of identifying gaps, constraints and emergency situations; this would allow the Commission to recommend priorities and ways of harmonizing the overall effort". The Commission also agreed that the needs, emergencies and priorities identified in the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* would provide the basis for the operation and periodic updating of the *Global Plan of Action.*

Progress since the Sixth Session and matters for consideration

37. In the country-driven preparatory process of the Fourth International Technical Conference, under the guidance of the Commission, Country Reports were prepared by 158 governments, assessing the status of their plant genetic resources, and their capacity to conserve and utilize them: the first *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* is largely based on this information, supplemented by information from the WIEWS. The *Report* assesses the state of plant genetic diversity and capacities at local, national, regional and global levels, for *in situ* management, *ex situ* conservation, and sustainable utilization. It identifies current gaps and needs and the priorities which are addressed in the *Global Plan of Action*. The International Technical Conference welcomed the *Report* as the first comprehensive world-wide assessment of the state of plant genetic resources conservation and use.

38. The Conference asked for the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* submitted to it (the "short" version) and its associated background documentation (the "long" version) to be issued as FAO information documents, and made widely available. The "short version" has been issued in all languages in an attractive set of documents, which also includes an introductory booklet and the *Global Plan of Action*: this has been very widely distributed, including to the Third CoP/CBD, the World Food Summit, and to many regional and international forums. Copies were also sent to all participants in the International Technical Conference and its preparatory process. The *Report* has been posted on the Internet, and a CD-ROM including these and other documents is being prepared. The "long version" has undergone a technical peer review and is being finalized for publication in English. Additional extra-budgetary resources will be sought for publication in other languages. Proposals for updating the *Report* are described in document CGRFA-7/97/5.

39. The International Technical Conference confirmed that the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic* Resources should be periodically updated. Before the preparation of the next *Report*, the Commission may wish to review its scope, in light of its broadened mandate. The *Global Plan of Action* recommended that governments periodically review and report on

designate a focal point (or reconfirm the existing focal point) to convey such information to FAO, the CoP/CBD and other appropriate bodies.

The World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources.

40. The World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources (WIEWS) collects, disseminates and facilitates the exchange of information that governments provide on plant genetic resources collections and related technologies. The WIEWS is an important tool for the periodic updating of the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources.* Its databases contain data on: the location of over 5.5 million plant genetic resources accessions, in some 1410 *ex situ* collections around the world; the structure and activities of national plant genetic resources programmes in almost all countries; some 8000 seed-supplying institutions around the world; commercial crop varieties; and relevant non-FAO databases and on how to obtain information from them. The Early Warning Mechanism is being developed to draw rapid attention to hazards threatening the operation of *ex situ* collections, and to the danger of the extinction of plant species and the loss of genetic diversity of crops for food and agriculture.

41. Other FAO databases on genetic resources of importance to food and agriculture include the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-is), which covers key areas of country-secure, regional and global information required for the management of farm animal genetic resources, and serves as the virtual structure for implementing the FAO Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources. A Global Information System on Forest Genetic Resources (REFORGEN) is also currently being developed, with information on conservation and sustainable utilization of forest genetic resources at the country level. It is planned that it will eventually be linked to the WIEWS.

Progress since the Sixth Session and matters for consideration

42. During the preparatory process for the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, the WIEWS provided essential data and up-to-date statistics on *ex situ* collections and national programmes for the preparation of the first *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources.* The WIEWS is now being expanded and updated with information from the 158 Country Reports prepared for the Conference.

43. The Second CoP, in its Decision II/16, welcomed FAO's offer to link its information mechanisms to the Convention's Clearing House Mechanism. FAO is prepared to be an active partner in the implementation of the Clearing House Mechanism's pilot phase. Internet access to the WIEWS for searching and reporting data is being established to facilitate access, including in the context of the Clearing House Mechanism. An Internet interface was demonstrated during the International Technical Conference, the Montreal meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technological and Technical Advice (SBSTTA) in September 1996, and the Third CoP, together with FAO's Domestic Animal Genetic Resources Information System (DAD-is). A stand-alone version of WIEWS, with data on countries' plant genetic resources programmes and on *ex situ* collections, is distributed upon request.

44. The *Global Plan of Action* also recommended that the efficiency, purpose and value of the WIEWS be evaluated, and that it be improved in the light of the results of the review. This evaluation will be undertaken in June 1997. In preparation, a Technical Consultation involving users of the WIEWS from all regions was organized in September 1996 in Poland. The meeting recommended the establishment of a network of government focal points to supply information for the WIEWS and cooperate in its development. FAO is currently contacting countries to identify such government focal points.

45. Following the decision of the Sixth Session of the Commission that the crop-related networks be regarded as part of the Global System, the WIEWS is establishing an inventory of networks involved in plant genetic resources activities and inviting coordinators, chairs or secretariats to cooperate with WIEWS. The development of crop databases is already being harmonized with the

46. A reporting format is being developed to present current data (including those provided in the Country Reports for the International Technical Conference) and governments are being requested to confirm and update them, and fill in any gaps. An option for electronic and direct updating by countries themselves will also be available. As recommended in the *Global Plan of Action*, relevant technical experts, national programme representatives, international organizations and the private sector will be invited to help elaborate an efficient methodology for monitoring genetic erosion.

Codes of Conduct and Guidelines

47. The **International Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collecting and Transfer** adopted by the FAO Conference in 1993, as Resolution 8/93, provides a guide which governments may use until they develop their own national regulations. The Sixth Session of the Commission recognized that the Code might require updating in the light, in particular, of the revised International Undertaking, and requested the Secretariat to prepare questionnaires to facilitate its monitoring function, and allow any necessary development, modification and updating.

48. A draft **Code of Conduct for Biotechnology**, as it affects the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, was prepared at the request of the Commission and considered at its Fifth Session in 1993. The draft Code includes provisions to maximize the positive effects of biotechnology and minimize potentially negative effects, as well as to promote access to relevant agro-biotechnologies. As recommended, FAO transmitted the biosafety component of the draft Code to the CBD Secretariat as an input to its work. The Sixth Session agreed to postpone further development of other elements of the draft Code until after the revision of the International Undertaking.

49. FAO and IPGRI have, since 1989, jointly published *Technical Guidelines for the Safe Movement of Plant Germplasm*. By the time of the Sixth Session, the following guidelines had been published: cocoa, edible aroids, *Musa* spp., sweet potato, yam, legumes, cassava, citrus, grapevine, vanilla, coconut, sugarcane, small fruits, and small grain temperate cereals.

50. The Sixth Session agreed a set of *Genebank standards*, jointly prepared by FAO and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), and requested that standards for *in vitro* collections and for field genebanks, as well as guidelines for regeneration, be submitted to it for consideration.

Progress since the Sixth Session and matters for consideration

51. Further progress on the two Codes of Conduct is pending completion of the revision of the International Undertaking.

52. The *Genebank standards* have now been published and are being widely used. Since the Sixth Session, further Technical Guidelines for the Safe Movement of Plant Germplasm have been published, for *Musa* spp. (second edition), stone fruits, and *Eucalyptus* spp. Guidelines are in preparation for *Pinus* spp., *Allium* spp., and potato. On the advice of expert consultations organized by IPGRI at ICRISAT and CIAT, *Regeneration of accessions in seed collections: a decision guide* is currently being finalized and *Guidelines for the management of field and* in vitro *genebanks* are under development: if these documents are ready by the time the session meets, they will be made available.

The International Network of *Ex Situ* Collections under the Auspices of FAO

53. The Commission called for the development of the International Network in 1989, in line with Article 7.1(a) of the International Undertaking, because of the uncertainty of the legal

Resolution 3 of the Nairobi Conference recognized the need to resolve this issue within the context of the FAO Global System.

54. Twelve Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research signed agreements with FAO in 1994, placing most of their collections (some 500,000 accessions) in the International Network. Through these agreements, the Centres accept, in particular, to hold designated germplasm "in trust for the benefit of the international community", and "not to claim ownership, or seek intellectual property rights over the designated germplasm and related information".

Progress since the Sixth Session[14] *and matters for consideration*

55. The Sixth Session of the Commission considered revised model agreements for adherence to the Network, harmonized with the provisions of the CBD, and agreed that negotiations with the 32 countries that had expressed their willingness to join the Network should continue, using the revised agreements as appropriate. It noted that the final form of such agreements would depend upon the outcome of the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking.

56. During the preparatory process of the International Technical Conference, several more expressed interest in joining the International Network. A number of relevant recommendations were made in the inter-governmental sub-regional meetings, particularly that institutions which had, prior to the entry into force of the Convention, made commitments for the availability and long-term conservation of their collections, within the former IBPGR Register of Base Collections, should now place those collections in the International Network. These collections from all over the world, many of which were made with IBPGR support, account - with those of the CGIAR - for about a quarter of the world's collections of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (and undoubtedly a much higher proportion of the world's unique accessions).

57. Since the Sixth Session, the CGIAR's System-wide Programme on Genetic Resources has reviewed the Centres' genebank operations, with FAO's participation: this showed that most of the genebanks are satisfactorily operated and generally well managed, though under-funded. The Review is available for the information of the Session.

58. The 1994 agreements with the twelve CGIAR Centres come up for renewal in 1998. Subject to guidance of the Commission, the Secretariat would propose to extend the life of the present agreements, pending the completion of the revision of the International Undertaking.

59. Consultations have been held between the Commission's Secretariat, the FAO Legal Office, and IPGRI on behalf of the International Coconut Genetic Resources Network, regarding the placing of coconut genetic resource collections held by the host countries on behalf of their respective regions and forming part of the network, into the International Network under the auspices of FAO. If a satisfactory draft Agreement is ready in time, it will be brought to the attention of the Commission for its guidance at this session.

Other Networks

60. In recent years, the complementarity of *in situ* and *ex situ* strategies has been recognized. The Commission has called for the establishment of **networks of *in situ* conservation areas**, which would include "on-farm" conservation of crops and *in situ* conservation of crop wild relatives. The *Global Plan of Action* contains a set of specific priority activities for *in situ* conservation, with an increased allocation of resources, especially in developing countries, and

[14] The first *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, provides the most up-to-date and comprehensive survey of *ex situ* collections throughout the world. Document CPGR-6/95/INF. 10,

now provides an agreed general framework for *in situ* conservation of crop genetic resources. *In situ* conservation is the main strategy for managing the genetic resources of perennial, largely wild and highly diverse forest tree species. The need to incorporate aspects of genetic resource conservation into protected area management strategies is among the stated criteria of most on-going international sustainable forest management initiatives. As the Commission recommended, the 1998 FAO World-wide International Expert Consultation on Ecosystem Conservation and Sustainable Rural Development is planned to include a review of the role of protected areas in *in situ* conservation.

61. The Sixth Session of the Commission recognized **Crop-related networks** as a useful approach to integrating activities on plant genetic resources within the Global System and strengthening practical linkages between the conservation and sustainable utilization of crop genetic resources. FAO has therefore continued to support the establishment of global and regional crop-related networks, covering a large variety of cultivated species, in close collaboration with relevant scientific organizations. Current information concerning such crop-related networks is given in document CGRFA-7/97/8.1. The *Global Plan of Action* stated that the Commission should be regularly informed of the state of diversity in collections and breeding populations of major crops of significance to world food security. In the context of the preparatory process of the International Technical Conference, it was suggested that crop-specific networks could report to the Commission on such matters.

Regional cooperation

62. The Commission, at its Fourth Session, took note of collaborative regional efforts on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and suggested "that FAO, through its regional conferences, should promote and strengthen inter-governmental and regional cooperation and structures in this field, and that the matter should be an agenda item at FAO Regional Conferences." The inter-governmental Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Meeting of the preparatory process of the International Technical Conference recalled this recommendation and developed a proposal for the region.[15] Preparatory meetings in other regions also emphasized the importance of strengthening sub-regional and regional coordination. In 1997, FAO and IICA (the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation) signed an agreement to cooperate in strengthening the Global System, at a regional level, in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Guidance expected from the Commission

63. In the context of the broadened mandate of the Commission and in line with para. 2(iv) and 2(v) of its terms of reference,[16] the Commission may wish to consider how it, and FAO, may cooperate most effectively with the CBD and the Commission on Sustainable Development, in the area of agrobiodiversity (see para. 5, 6, 9 and 15), *inter alia* through:

- appropriate mechanisms for cooperation and coordination, in order to avoid duplication, and ensure coordination, synergy, and, to the extent possible, integrated approaches between the agriculture and the environment sectors, both at national and international level (see para. 5);
- the development of appropriate strategies and plans (see para. 8, 32 and 33);
- the definition of policies and priorities including criteria for funding (see para. 8, 33 and 34); and
- harmonization of national reporting on agrobiodiversity in the various forums (see para. 39, 41 and 44; see also document CGRFA-7/97/5).

Guidance regarding such coordination may need to cover cooperation with both the governing bodies and their Secretariats. In this respect the Commission's attention is drawn to para. 5-10 of this document and to Decision III/11 in the report of the Third CoP (in document UNEP/CBD/COP/3/REP).

64. The Commission may wish to provide guidance on how its broadened mandate might affect the further development of the various components of the Global System, and make recommendations in this regard, in line with para. 2(ii) of the terms of reference (see para. 2 and 39).

65. In the context of the Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources, the Commission may also wish to consider the following issues:

- Monitoring of progress in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and how future review or adjustments of the *Global Plan of Action* will be facilitated (see para. 35; see also document CGRFA-7/97/5).
- Funding and/or financing mechanisms for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* (para. 8, 24-28, 30 and 31-35; see also document CGRFA-7/97/4 Annex).
- The proposed process for the updating of the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* (see para. 39; see also document CGRFA-7/97/5).
- Further collaborative development, improvement and review of the WIEWS, in particular the elaboration of the early warning component (para. 40-46).
- Designation (or re-confirmation) by countries of national focal points (see para. 39 and 44).
- Extension of existing agreements with the twelve CGIAR Centres, and the possible agreement with the International Coconut Genetic Resources Network, in the context of the International Network of *Ex Situ* Collection under the auspices of FAO (para. 58 and 59).
- How crop-specific and regional plant genetic resources network might contribute to the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and possibly report to the Commission, on matters such as the state of diversity of particular crops (para. 61).
- How regional collaboration may be strengthened at inter-governmental level (para. 62).

APPENDIX 1

COUNTRIES' PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES (February 1997)

AFRICA

Algeria 1/2
Angola 1/2/3
Benin 1/2/3
Botswana 1/3
Burkina Faso 1/2/3
Burundi 1/3
Cameroon 1/2/3
Cape Verde 1/2/3
Central African Republic 1/2/3
Chad 1/2
Congo 1/2/3
Côte d'Ivoire 1/2/3
Equatorial Guinea 1/2/3
Eritrea 1/3
Ethiopia 1/2/3/4
Gabon 1/2/3
Gambia 1/3
Ghana 1/2/3
Guinea 1/2/3
Guinea-Bissau 1
Kenya 1/2/3/4
Lesotho 1/3
Liberia 1/2
Madagascar 1/2/3/4
Malawi 1/2/3
Mali 1/2/3
Mauritania 1/2/3
Mauritius 1/2/3
Morocco 1/2/3/4
Mozambique 1/2/3
Namibia 3
Niger 1/2/3
Nigeria 3
Rwanda 1/2/3
Senegal 1/2/3/4
Seychelles 3
Sierra Leone 1/2/3
South Africa 1/2/3
Sudan 1/2/3
Swaziland 1/3
Tanzania 1/2/3
Togo 1/2/3/4
Uganda 1/3
Zaire 1/3
Zambia 1/2/3
Zimbabwe 1/2/3

ASIA & THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC

Australia 1/2/3
Bangladesh 1/2/3/4
Bhutan 3
Cambodia 3
China 1/3/4
Cook Islands 3
Democratic People's Republic of Korea 1/2/3
Fiji 2
India 1/2/3/4
Indonesia 1/3
Japan 1/3
Korea, Republic of 1/2/3
Malaysia 1/3
Maldives 1/3
Mongolia 1/3
Myanmar 1/3
Nepal 1/2/3
Niue 3
New Zealand 1/2/3
Pakistan 1/3/4
Papua New Guinea 1/2/3
Philippines 1/2/3/4
Samoa 1/2/3
Solomon Islands 1/2/3
Sri Lanka 1/2/3
Thailand 1/3
Tonga 1/2/3
Vanuatu 1
Vietnam 1/3

NEAR EAST

Afghanistan 1
Azerbaijan 1/3
Bahrain 2
Egypt 1/2/3
Iran 1/2/3/4
Iraq 1/2/3/4
Jordan 1/3
Kazakhstan 3
Kuwait 2/3
Lebanon 1/2/3
Libya 1/2/3
Oman 2/3
Qatar 3
Saudi Arabia 3
Syria 1/2/3/4
Tunisia 1/2/3/4
Turkmenistan 3/4
Uzbekistan 3/4
Yemen 1/2/3/4

EUROPE

Albania 1/3
Armenia 1/3
Austria 1/2/3
Belarus 3
Belgium 1/2/3
Bosnia and Herzegovina 1
Bulgaria 1/2/3
Croatia 1/3
Cyprus 1/2/3
Czech Republic 1/2/3/4
Denmark 1/2/3/4
Estonia 1/3
European Community 1
Finland 1/2/3/4
France 1/2/3/4
Georgia 1
Germany 1/2/3/4
Greece 1/2/3
Hungary 1/2/3
Iceland 1/2/3
Ireland 1/2/3
Israel 1/2/3
Italy 1/2/3/4
Latvia 1/3
Liechtenstein 2
Lithuania 1/3
Malta 1/3
Moldova 3
Netherlands 1/2/3
Norway 1/2/3/4
Poland 1/2/3
Portugal 1/2/3
Romania 1/2/3
Russia 2/3
Slovak Republic 1/3
Slovenia 1/3
Spain 1/2/3/4
Sweden 1/2/3/4
Switzerland 1/2/3/4
Turkey 1/2/3/4
Ukraine 3
United Kingdom 1/2/3/4
Yugoslavia 1/2/3

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Antigua and Barbuda 1/2/3
Argentina 1/2/3/4
Bahamas 1/2/3
Barbados 1/2/3
Belize 1/2
Bolivia 1/2/3
Brazil 1/3/4
Chile 1/2/3/4
Colombia 1/2/3/4
Costa Rica 1/2/3/4
Cuba 1/2/3
Dominica 1/2/3
Dominican Republic 1/2/3
Ecuador 1/2/3/4
El Salvador 1/2/3
Grenada 1/2/3
Guatemala 1/3
Guyana 1/3
Haiti 1/2/3
Honduras 1/2/3
Jamaica 1/2/3
Mexico 1/2/3/4
Nicaragua 1/2/3
Panama 1/2/3
Paraguay 1/2/3
Peru 1/2/3
Saint Christopher and Nevis 1/3
Saint Lucia 1/3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 1/3
Suriname 1/3
Trinidad and Tobago 1/2/3
Uruguay 1/3/4
Venezuela 1/3

NORTH AMERICA

Canada 1/3/4
United States of America 1/3/4

*** 171 countries and the European Community are participating actively in the development of major components of the Global System. Other elements of the System, such as the Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collecting and Transfer and the WIEWS, which do not have individual memberships, are not listed here**

1/ Membership of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (150 countries and the European Community).
2/ Adherence to the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources (111 countries).
3/ Countries that have actively contributed to the preparation of the *Global Plan of Action* and the *Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources*, by presenting national reports and participating in the inter-governmental meetings that culminated in formal adoption, by governments in the Fourth International Technical Conference of the *Global Plan of Action* (159 countries).
4/ Countries that have expressed the wish to put national *ex situ* collections under the auspices of FAO, and/or to store international collections in their genebanks (40 countries).

APPENDIX 2

DECISION II/15: *FAO GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE*

The *Conference of the Parties*:

"*Recognizing* the special nature of agricultural biodiversity, its distinctive features and problems needing distinctive solutions;

"*Taking note* of the Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture developed by member countries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, and the recommendation for strengthening it expressed in chapter 14 of Agenda 21;

"*Recalling* that Resolution 3 of the Nairobi Final Act of the Conference for the Adoption of the Agreed Text of the Convention on Biological Diversity recognized 'the need to seek solutions to outstanding matters concerning plant genetic resources within the Global System for the Conservation and Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Sustainable Agriculture, in particular (a) access to *ex situ* collections not acquired in accordance with this Convention; and (b) the question of farmers' rights';

"1. *Considers* that the outstanding matters should be resolved as soon as possible;

"2. Declares its support for the process engaged in the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources to comply with these recommendations, especially through:

"(1) The implementation of FAO Conference Resolution 7/93 for the adaptation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity;

"(2) Convening the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture through which two important elements of the Global System, the first State of the World report on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the first Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, are being developed through a country-driven process."