

	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	CPGR/93/3 January 1993
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	ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ALIMENTATION ET L'AGRICULTURE	
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COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

Fifth Session

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REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ITS SEVENTH SESSION

Table of Contents

	Paras.
I. Introduction	1
II. The International Conference and Programme on PGR	2-14
III. Other Implications of UNCED	15-24
IV. Other Matters	25-26

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP OF THE COMMISSION ON
PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN

I. Introduction

1. The 7th Session of the Working Group was attended by Cape Verde, Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, U.S.A. and Venezuela., and was chaired by Mr. M. Worede (Ethiopia). The Working Group discussed two main documents: CPGR/WG/92/3 - Preparations for the 4th International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Use of Plant Genetic Resources (ICPGR), and CPGR/WG/92/4 - Implications of UNCED for the Global System on PGR.

II. The International Conference and Programme on PGR.

2. The Secretariat informed the Working Group that the International Technical Conference had been requested by both FAO Conference and Agenda 21 of UNCED. It also informed that the modifications introduced in the project document to meet the recommendations of an Expert Consultation held in June 1992 on this subject had raised the estimated cost of the project from about US\$ 7 million to almost US\$ 10 million and expressed concern for the budgetary implication it may have for the organization, asking the Group to identify areas where the cost could be reduced.

3. The Group agreed that major aims of the Conference and its preparatory process would be:

- (i) to transform the relevant parts of Agenda 21 (especially area G of Chapter 14) into a costed Global Plan of Action; and
- (ii) to make the Global System for the Conservation and Use of PGR fully operational.

4. It was underlined that some of the activities envisaged at national, regional and global level during the two and a half years of preparatory process would enhance record keeping of existing PGR, raise public awareness and promote effective dialogue and coordination between all parties concerned with PGR and that these activities should be considered as concrete steps towards the implementation of Agenda 21. The Working Group also emphasized that the ICPGR should give similar importance to the conservation (*in situ* and "on-farm" - especially the Vavilov areas - and *ex situ*) and utilization (including plant breeding, biotechnology and seed production) aspects of PGR. It finally stressed the need to address economic aspects of PGR and to quantify genetic erosion.

5. The Group emphasized that the project document CPGR/WG/92/3 envisaged a full "programme" and not just a "conference". Given the need to raise awareness and forge commitment for action, the Group observed that the process involved more than the simple production of a number of documents. Indeed, the conference should be seen as a step in the process of developing consensus and commitment for a Global Plan of Action. The Group stressed the importance of the bottom-up country driven approach and suggested that this approach be given prominence in the project document. It was thought that, with such a clarification, potential donors would understand that the budget includes far more than the holding of a conference.
6. While some delegations thought that the cost of the project reflected in the draft project document, *circa* \$10m, was fully justified, other delegations thought that there were possibilities for reducing the cost. The Working Group recognized that the budget for the ICPGR may have to be reduced, and expressed its hope that such reductions, if necessary, should compromise neither the scientific integrity nor the bottom-up country driven, approach of the process currently reflected in the draft project document. Amongst the items cited for possible budget reductions were: reducing the size of the core secretariat; reducing the amount allocated for financing travel by developing country representatives to various meetings; reducing general administrative and servicing costs; reducing the amount of documentation; reducing the number of sub-regional meetings; reducing the number of country reports; and/or reducing the number of theme papers and case studies.
7. On the question of funding, the Group noted the recommendation of the Commission and the Conference that funds should be extra-budgetary. However, some countries encourage the idea of exploring that some resources be made available from the FAO programme of work & budget for 94/95. Other sources such as the GEF were also mentioned. During the discussion, some countries expressed their intention to provide extra-budgetary funds for the ICPGR, following the reception of the project proposal.
8. The Group considered that, given the constraints on time and the need to get soonest concrete financial commitments, the project document should be sent to potential donors as soon as possible. Work on the preparatory process should be well under way before the meeting of the Commission in April. The Commission then will have the opportunity to review the process in the light of the donors' financial commitments made and provide appropriate Terms of Reference of the ICPGR.
9. The Working Group discussed its possible role and that of the proposed "Advisory Committee" during the preparatory process of the ICPGR. A suggested solution for which there seemed to be agreement was:
- (i) that a "Group of Experts" provides technical and scientific expert advice to the Secretariat. FAO would have responsibility for appointing the Group of Experts, recognizing that the primary concern is competence, but with regard to the need for regional balance;

- (ii) that the Commission provides guidance at a political and policy level and that it decides -- in its regular session in April 1993 -- the precise role and mandate of its Working Group in the preparatory process;
- (iii) additionally, the Commission might wish to function, at its 6th Regular Session in April 1995, as a preparatory body to review and negotiate the draft Global Plan of Action.

In this context one country observed that the meetings of the Commission and its Working Group discussing the ICPGR should be regarded as part of the FAO contribution.

10. With regard to the question of whether or not there should be a meeting of the Commission immediately after the ICPGR, an alternative suggestion to be also proposed to the Commission in April is that the ICPGR be attended by both technical experts and policy makers and that it will effectively become a "summit meeting" for its last two days -- for adoption and signing of the Global Plan of Action -- during which attendance at a high level will be encouraged .

11. The Group agreed on the need to facilitate participation of developing countries at the Conference if funding is available. In order that both technical experts and policy makers can attend, a minimum of two participants per country was found desirable. Funding might possibly come from bilateral donors, but efforts should be made to allow multilateral funding of at least one participant from each interested developing country. The country suggested that the establishment of a separate trust fund might facilitate financing participation of developing countries representatives.

12. There was general support for the proposal of using the FAO Regional Conferences in the consultation process, and some countries supported the idea of extending these Regional Conferences in order to allow time for discussions related to the ICPGR.

13. The Group agreed that although "country reports" are part of the project proposal, full-scale "country studies", which may or may not be undertaken in parallel, are outside the proposal. However, the preparatory process should draw upon any relevant information arising from the later. In this context the Group encouraged the full and active involvement of FAO in the country studies on biodiversity, which are being coordinated by UNEP.

14. The Group considered that the preparatory process of the conference to be led by FAO should ensure the participation of relevant organizations dealing with *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation as well as utilization of PGR. IBPGR, the IARCs and the Secretariat of the Biodiversity Convention as well as the World Bank, GEF and other multilateral financial institutions were singled out.

III. Other Implications of UNCED

15. It was recognized that there were many complex issues under this item and that further discussion would be required at the Commission. Some delegations expressed disappointment that an extraordinary session of the Commission to consider the implications of UNCED had not been convened due to lack of funding. A delegation member considered that the ICPGR would be a suitable forum to address some of these issues.

16. The Group noted that Agenda 21 has recommended the strengthening of the Global System and its different components making special reference to the need to take further steps to develop Farmers' Rights. The Group supported the strengthening of the Global System and the need to realizing Farmers' Rights by implementing Resolution C 91/3. Some countries suggested that the International Fund and mechanism envisaged in this resolution can be a window of the fund for the Convention on Biodiversity, and maybe of GEF during the interim period.

17. The Group noted that the Resolution 3 "The Interrelationship Between between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture" approved without reservation by the Diplomatic Conference for the Adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity, considered that there should be complementarity between the Convention and the FAO Global System on PGR and the "outstanding matters" such as access to existing *ex situ* collections and the development of Farmers' Rights should seek solutions within the Global System.

18. While some delegations did not express a view on the interpretation of the Convention on Biodiversity with regard to the issues of access to existing *ex situ* collections, those which did express a view favoured the interpretation that these genetic resources are excluded from the Convention and since most of them were collected on the general understanding that PGR were the heritage of mankind, these resources should continue to be freely available, possibly with a global compensatory mechanism. The problem (in some cases impossibility) of identifying the country/ies of origin for much of the material stored in genebanks was noted and recognized as an handicap for developing bilateral agreements with each country of origin. It was further noted that much of the material stored in *ex situ* collections has been widely distributed to many genebanks and breeders and consequently the country of origin, when known, and even if bilateral agreements were granted to it, might have real difficulties to exercise any kind of control on these collections. It was suggested that the implementation of Farmers Rights, as envisaged in FAO Conference Resolution 3/91, might provide a suitable compensation mechanism.

19. The hope was expressed that the Code of Conduct for Germplasm Collection and Transfer should be finalized and agreed at the next meeting of the Commission.

20. The issue of "on-farm" conservation was discussed, and it was noted that this would be an important and complementary method for conserving PGR for food and agriculture productive importance, particularly in Vavilov centres of diversity.

21. There was general agreement that consideration should be given to a possible review of the International Undertaking. While some delegations thought that this should be limited to revising the Undertaking in order to integrate the three annexes with the main text of the Undertaking in order to improve internal consistency, others thought that the Undertaking should be re-negotiated to become a legally binding instrument, possibly as a protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity with its own funding, secretariat and governing body. In this context, it was emphasized that the agreements embodied in the Undertaking and its annexes were the result of many years of careful and painstaking work and negotiation that must be preserved and form the basis of any further negotiations. It was agreed that any revision or re-negotiation of the Undertaking should be a step-by-step process in the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, and that while ensuring the maintenance of the current adherence, it should aim at attracting the countries which did not yet adhere to it. It was suggested that the Secretariat might prepare a note for the next meeting of the Commission on this idea. A country expressed its hope that a reviewed International Undertaking could be ready for endorsement during the ICPGR.

22. The need for full cooperation and interaction between the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and in the interim period, the intergovernmental Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as between both Secretariats was recognized.

23. Several countries stressed the special nature of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) and the differences on methodologies and strategies between the conservation and sustainable use of general Biodiversity and that of PGRFA, including the different emphasis needed on intra-species diversity. Based on these considerations, there was general agreement that the CPGR should keep its role as the primary intergovernmental forum for discussions and negotiations of technical and policy matters related to conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, including the development of possible protocols for the Convention on Biodiversity related to PGRFA. In this context the Group suggested that ways and means for cooperation and distribution of responsibilities between the CPGR and the interim Intergovernmental Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity should be developed.

24. Support was expressed for the ideas that at the institutional level: (i) the Commission should provide policy advice to the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on matters related to PGRFA, and to the Participants' Assembly of the GEF on funding of PGRFA projects; (ii) the Commission should report to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development on the implementation of the Agenda 21 programme area on PGRFA.

IV. Other matters

25. The Working Group was informed that Mr. C. di Mottola Balestra has presented his resignation as Chairman of the Working Group. The Group expressed its truthful appreciation for the work accomplished by Mr. di Mottola during his two mandates in the chair of the Group and agreed that Mr. M. Worede, Chairman of Commission would chair the Working Group till the Commission accepts the resignation of Mr. di Mottola and designates a new Chairman.

26. The Group also discussed the current Terms of Reference and regulations and the possibility of amending and adapting them to the current needs, especially in view of the possible role it may have in the preparation process of the ICPGR. It was mentioned that the revision should cover elements such as interaction between the Working Group and the Chairman of the Commission as well as renewal of membership of the Working Group. Some members of the Working Group volunteered to send suggestions for a possible revision of the Terms of Reference.