

	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	CPGR/91/3 February 1991
	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	
	ORGANIZACION DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA LA AGRICULTURA Y LA ALIMENTACION	

Item 3 of the
 Provisional Agenda

COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

Fourth Session

Rome, 15-19 April 1991

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

w/z6987

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

Report by the Chairman

The Fourth Session of the working Group was held under my chairmanship on 16 (p.m.), 17 and 18 October 1989. It was attended by representatives from the following countries: Australia, Cape Verde, the Congo, El Salvador, Kenya, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Venezuela and Yugoslavia.

The following items of interest were discussed.

1. Relations between FAO and IBPGR

On this item, the Working Group approved the document presented by the Secretariat, which was to serve as a basis for the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations. The Working Group also stressed the following points:

- i) In the Memorandum of Understanding IBPGR shall explicitly adhere to the principles of the International Undertaking and accept the intergovernmental authority of the Commission. IBPGR shall also pledge itself to promote actively the adherence of countries to the Undertaking and their participation in the Commission.
- ii) IBPGR shall also recognize explicitly in the Memorandum of Understanding the status of donors, whether of funds, germplasm or both, of all countries in the world and especially that of germplasm donors of developing countries.
- iii) IBPGR shall keep the Commission regularly informed of its activities and programmes.
- iv) Both FAO and the Commission shall be appropriately represented on IBPGR.
- v) It is necessary to define FAO's role in the appointment of IBPGR members.
- vi) FAO shall have permanent access, if possible through direct computer line, to IBPGR data banks and data bases. It shall also receive information directly on all IBPGR activities. This will ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.

- vii) The methodologies and technical standards developed by IBPGR shall be ratified by FAO in order to acquire universal value and be more easily adopted by countries.
- viii) Although the function of IBPGR shall be essentially technical and scientific, and that of the Commission essentially institutional, political and legal, FAO shall maintain the technical and scientific activities needed to carry out its mandate and the responsibilities assigned to it by its Governing Bodies.

The Working Group also expressed the opinion that, if cooperation between FAO and IBPGR were to be possible, the latter should remain physically near FAO Headquarters in Rome.

Lastly, the Working Group expressed its wish to ratify, before it came into force, the Memorandum of Understanding to be prepared by both organizations.

2. Animal genetic resources and biodiversity

The Working Group studied the recommendations of the Expert Consultation on FAO Programmes for the Preservation of Animal Genetic Resources and agreed that:

- i) there were technical differences between the conservation of plant and animal genetic resources;
- ii) there were, however, legal, institutional and financial problems common to the conservation of plant and animal genetic resources;
- iii) FAO needed to strengthen its technical capacity and have a legal, institutional and financial structure to conserve animal genetic resources;
- iv) any structure for animal genetic resources should be established on the same principles and in the same spirit as those for plant genetic resources.

The Working Group recognized that consideration could be given to the options mentioned below, among others, without there being any priority in the order in which they are listed:

1. The establishment for animal genetic resources of legal, institutional and financial mechanisms similar to those already existing for plant genetic resources.
2. The expansion of the existing legal, institutional and financial mechanisms for plant genetic resources (Undertaking, Commission and Fund) to cover animal genetic resources as well.
3. Possible combinations between the above two options (1. and 2.) (for example, different Undertakings and Joint Commission and Fund).

4. The use of other FAO bodies and/or structures (for example, COAG) to fill the existing gaps in the area of animal genetic resources.

It was emphasized that, despite the need to have different programmes for plant and animal genetic resources, the FAO administrative structure concerned should be a single one, or else provide joint coverage, so that FAO would deal with problems related to biological diversity and its conservation with a single conceptual approach.

The Working Group recommended that the Director-General's decision take into account: i) the need to keep costs down; ii) the desirability of covering both use and conservation ex situ and in situ (in the latter case plants and animals cannot be separated), and linking the concepts of conservation and use development; iii) initiatives taken in this field by other organizations inside and outside the United Nations System; and iv) advances in biotechnology permitting the transfer of germplasm between different species.

The Working Group supported the Director-General's request to the Council to examine the many technical, institutional and policy aspects of the function and future programmes of FAO in the important sector of animal genetic resources, including a study of the possibilities of incorporating in one system the institutional infrastructure for both animal and plant genetic resources, while bearing in mind the relations with and needs of fisheries, fauna and flora. The Working Group also supported the request by the Director-General for extra-budgetary resources to start the many urgent activities needed in the field of animal genetic resources.

The Working Group considered that the subject of animal and plant genetic resources should be looked at within the general context of genetic and biological diversity. The Working Group also considered that FAO should, in accordance with its mandate, continue to play a leading role in the conservation of natural resources, especially genetic and biological diversity of real and/or potential economic or social interest for agriculture, animal husbandry, wildlife, forestry or fisheries. This task should be performed in full cooperation with other United Nations agencies.

In this connection, the working Group considered that FAO should ensure:

- i) that full recognition is accorded to the links between conservation and development (in agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries) and also the role of developing countries as donors of genetic resources;
- ii) that full recognition is accorded to the rights of developing countries to benefit and receive compensation for their contribution and commitment to the conservation of genetic diversity;
- iii) that any new development undertaken to provide a global approach to problems related to genetic resources and biological diversity in general is able to take maximum advantage of existing experience and structures;

- iv) that any development undertaken to provide a global approach to problems related to genetic resources and biological diversity in general is based on the same spirit and the same principles of free exchange as those constituting the foundations of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, respecting the legitimate rights of donors of genes and/or technology to be compensated for their contribution (this is the case of breeders' rights and farmers' rights as defined by FAO).

The Working Group recognized FAO's pioneering work in the fields of conservation and use of biological diversity, whether intra-specific or at the level of the ecosystem, in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry or fisheries.

3. Conservation of germplasm in permafrost

The Acting Director of IBPGR informed the Working Group of the discussions that this Organization is holding with the Government of Norway with regard to a mine in Spitsbergen, a Norwegian zone of permanent cold where germplasm could be stored at a constant temperature of -3.7°C . It is the intention of the Government of Norway to offer this facility to any country or institution that so wishes to deposit plant germplasm samples or duplicates of their base collections of plant germplasm for long-term storage. The FAO Legal Counsel and the Acting Director of IBPGR pointed out that one of the problems to be solved was the legal coverage of this project, and this could be facilitated by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between an international organization with legal status and the Government of Norway. The Legal Counsel considered it possible that FAO might provide this cover (IBPGR does not have legal status).

The Working Group expressed its interest in the project and recommended that FAO, within the legal framework of the International Undertaking, particularly Article 7.1.a. on the establishment of a network of base collections in germplasm banks under the auspices of FAO, initiate contacts with the Government of Norway to study the possibility of reaching an agreement to provide legal cover for this project. The Working Group considered that this cover should not involve any economic burden for FAO and should be established in line with the four models proposed by FAO and discussed and approved by the Second and Third Sessions of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources. The Working Group also expressed the hope that it would be possible to store in the Spitsbergen germplasm bank, and under conditions laid down in the Memorandum of Understanding, both national and truly international collections, without discrimination. Lastly, the Working Group agreed that IBPGR could provide technical and scientific advice and assist the contracting parties in establishing minimum standards and requirements to be met not only by the collections to be deposited there but also by the germplasm bank itself.

The Working Group was also informed by the Secretariat of the Commission of similar initiatives being studied by developing

countries to use natural conditions or unconventional sources of energy for the long-term conservation of germplasm, such as: i) night cold temperatures and solar energy in highlands (3 000 to 4 000 m) in Abrapampa, Argentina; and ii) natural or artificial caves under mountain glaciers in Ancash, Peru. The Working Group considered these initiatives highly interesting and worthy of support because they were: i) economical; ii) independent of electricity cuts, which often affect traditional germplasm banks; iii) easy to use in both developed and developing countries; and iv) places far away from urban centres and therefore safer in the event of war.

4. Other matters

The Representative of Venezuela informed the Working Group of the adhesion of his country to the International Undertaking. The Working Group noted that, with this adhesion, there was now a total of 121 countries that were members of the Commission (101) or adhering to the international Undertaking (90) or both.

The working Group also expressed its satisfaction at the award of the Right Livelihood Prize (Alternative Nobel Prize) to the Second Vice-Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Melaku Worede (Ethiopia), for his work in the field of plant genetic resources.