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# COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

## Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda

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

#### Seventh Session

Rome, 9 - 11 July 2014

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

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its Seventh Session, the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture will receive reports from international organizations and forums. This report has been prepared by Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) to provide an input to the discussions by the Working Group, and to its advice to the Commission.
2. This information document focuses on major outcomes arising from the Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty, which was held in Muscat, Oman, on 24-28 September 2013. The document also provides information on the implementation of the Resolutions adopted by Governing Body during the 2014-2015 biennium. The information provided in this document will be complemented by the Secretariat of the International Treaty during the session of the Working Group.

## II. WORKING GROUP TO ENHANCE THE FUNCTIONING OF THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

3. A major breakthrough made at the Fifth Session of the Governing Body is the establishment of an “Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing.” The Working Group would develop a range of measures for consideration and decision by the Governing Body at its Sixth Session that will (i) increase user-based payments and contributions to the Benefit-sharing Fund in a sustainable and predictable long-term manner, and (ii) enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System (MLS) by additional measures.
4. For this purpose, the Treaty Secretariat is preparing a number of short strategic preliminary studies. On the basis of those studies, the Working Group will (i) review the functioning of the MLS and the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA), in particular, the benefit-sharing provisions of the SMTA, (ii) analyse the options to enhance the functioning of the MLS, (iii) consult with relevant Stakeholder Groups, and (iv) draft and prepare the range of measures for consideration and decision by the Governing Body.
5. The first meeting of the Working Group was held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 14-16 May 2014, and Mr Modesto Fernandez (Cuba) and Mr Bert Visser (The Netherlands) were elected as its two Co-Chairpersons. During the meeting, the Working Group reviewed, first, the factors leading to the current short-fall of user-based income to the Benefit-sharing Fund. It then reviewed the six innovative approaches for generating income for the Benefit-sharing Fund that were identified during the last biennium. It was agreed to keep all approaches under review, in preparation for the second meeting, and identified factors for further evaluating and developing the innovative approaches. In its later meetings, the Working Group would need to consider the expansion of Treaty access and benefit-sharing provisions, to enhance the functioning of the MLS.
6. At the end of the first meeting, a number of recommendations regarding the preparation of the second and third meetings were provided, including on the schedule for the next meetings and the studies being prepared by the Secretariat and to be made available at the second meeting. The Working Group also requested the Co-Chairs to continue the established practice of consulting intersessionally with stakeholder groups, in a formal, transparent and inclusive manner, to assist in the development of innovative approaches and to report back on progress at the second meeting. It requested the Regional Groups to enable consultations amongst Contracting Parties and with stakeholders during the intersessional period in preparation for the second meeting. Finally, the Working Group also requested the stakeholders groups to consult their constituencies by contacting their members, holding discussions, and contributing inputs from their constituencies to the second meeting.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Report of the first meeting of the Working Group will be made available at: <http://www.planttreaty.org/content/first-meeting-ad-hoc-open-ended-working-group-enhance-functioning-multilateral-system-access>

### III. SUSTAINABLE USE

7. The Programme of Work on Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) and Supporting Initiatives has been endorsed by the Governing Body at the Fifth Session. It will be implemented in cooperation with relevant FAO technical units and other institutions such as the CGIAR and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Contracting Parties and stakeholders are requested to report on their implementation to the Governing Body.

8. Subject to the availability of financial resources, the Governing Body has also decided to reconvene the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Sustainable Use of PGRFA. The Committee will provide advice to the Secretary on (i) coordination of the Programme of Work, (ii) cooperation with the CBD and other international processes and institutions, and (iii) development of the toolbox on sustainable use of PGRFA in order to assist Contracting Parties in the implementation of Article 6 of the Treaty, taking into consideration appropriate parts of Article 5 that include in situ, on farm and ex situ conservation strategies, including wild relatives and neglected and underutilized species of local and regional importance for food security and sustainable development.

9. The recognized elements of the Supporting Initiatives of the Programme of Work are:

- the Platform for the Co-Development and Transfer of Technology which, after the Governing Body's session, is rapidly be piloting a first information-sharing and capacity-building facility, and
- the Public-Private Partnerships for Pre-Breeding, intended as a policy forum with the aim of promoting the widest possible access to high-potential, stabilized, pre-commercial material. The ITPGRFA would offer a well-tailored framework to ensure the establishment of such a partnership.

### IV. FARMERS' RIGHTS

10. The resolution on Farmers' Rights of the Governing Body has requested the Secretariat, among other things, to (i) review the submissions made by Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders on the implementation of Farmers' Rights, (ii) derive examples, in a systematic way, as options for national implementation of Article 9 of the Treaty, and contact organizations and possible peer reviewers of the document on examples, (iii) report on relevant discussions that relate to Farmers' Rights within FAO fora, including the Committee on Food Security, (iv) invite UPOV and WIPO to jointly identify possible areas of interrelations among their respective international instruments. Contracting Parties are also equally invited to take initiatives to protect and promote Farmers' Rights, such as considering reviewing and/or developing national action plans for the implementation of Article 9, convening workshops and consultations for the exchange of knowledge, views and experience.

### V. GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

11. Giving the importance of the development of a global information system to facilitate the exchange of information on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to PGRFA, the Governing Body has requested the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration with relevant FAO departments and other stakeholders, especially with the Convention on Biological Diversity, to promote greater access to relevant data and information by Contracting Parties and other stakeholders. Based on the relevant resolution, the preparation has been under way to call for an expert consultation on the Global Information System of Article 17 of the Treaty. Based on the inputs of the expert consultation, a vision paper would be prepared to serve as the basis for a detailed and realistic work programme for the Global Information System in line with Article 17.

12. In this context, the Secretariat has initiated an information gathering exercise for an expert consultation, including one with the academic sector, the issuance of a notification calling for inputs and a series of surveys to map out the current landscape of projects, initiatives as well as gaps and needs at country and regional levels. It is expected that together with the vision, the expert will discuss a roadmap to implement the Global Information System. A major step forward at operational

level is the support that the Secretariat is currently providing to the Initiative DivSeek in the area of plant genomics.

## **VI. COOPERATION WITH OTHER BODIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

13. As the Treaty has been growing its significance as the specific international instrument responsible for the plant genetic resources for food and agriculture within the global governance and operational architecture on genetic resources, its interfaces with related conventions and organizations have become especially important to ensure the Treaty's harmonious relationship with other instruments for effective development and implementation of coordinated activities.

14. In this context, the Governing Body has recommended strengthening policy and operational collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Global Crop Diversity Trust and approved the establishment of liaison officer positions with the two institutions for the biennium 2014-2015. These two organizations have particular importance to the Treaty, and in its past Sessions the Governing Body has been continuously instructing the Secretary to maintain close and good working relationships with them. The liaison posts would enhance cooperation and promote common objectives with these institutions in relevant areas of the Treaty implementation, taking also into account the existing cooperation with the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and other units.

## **VII. THIRD PROJECT CYCLE OF THE BENEFIT-SHARING FUND**

15. The Benefit-sharing Fund is a key operational mechanism of the Treaty. It holds financial resources for benefit-sharing that are under the direct control of the Governing Body of the Treaty, and invests in high impact projects supporting smallholder farmers in developing countries who conserve and sustainably use plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

16. Following to the announcement made at the Fifth Session of the Governing Body, the Bureau of the Governing Body opened the Third Call for Proposals under the Benefit-sharing Fund on 7 March 2014 with a target of approving, by the end of 2014, a global project portfolio of more than USD 10 million.

17. Within the three agreed priorities of the Benefit-sharing Fund: (i) Managing and conserving plant genetic resources on farm; (ii) Sustainable use of plant genetic resources; and (iii) Information exchange, technology transfer and capacity-building, the thematic focus of the Third Call for Proposals is helping to ensure sustainable food security by assisting farmers to adapt to climate change through a targeted set of high impact activities on the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. The Third Call for Proposals includes a new funding window that focuses on the co-development and transfer of technologies and related information and capacity building.