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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

CONTENTS

	Para.
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 2
II. BACKGROUND: AIMS, STRATEGY AND INPUTS	3 - 7
III. PROGRESS REPORT	
1. Establishment of the Project Secretariat, staff support from FAO and IPGRI and appointment of sub-regional consultants	8 - 11
2. Country and Sub-regional Activities	12 - 27
3. Technical Inputs to the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action	28 - 41
4. Cooperation with other institutions, communications and outreach	42 - 47
5. Organization for the Fourth International Technical Conference and associated activities	48 - 50

IV.	FUNDING SITUATION	51 - 54
V.	ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION	55 - 57

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In response to the request of the FAO Conference to convene the "Fourth International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources"¹ FAO established a multi-donor trust fund project: the "International Conference and Programme for Plant Genetic Resources" (ICPPGR)¹. The aim of the ICPPGR is to develop, through a participatory country-driven process, a first Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, and a first costed Global Plan of Action for the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, to be presented for adoption at the Fourth International Technical Conference in June 1996. The Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and its Working Group provide policy guidance on the preparatory process.
2. This document reviews progress in the implementation of the ICPPGR during the period November 1994 to April 1995, that is since the last progress report to the Commission at its first extraordinary session (Document CPGR-Ex1/94/6).

II. BACKGROUND: AIMS, STRATEGY AND INPUTS

3. The Twenty-seventh Session of the FAO Conference, in November 1993, strongly emphasized the importance of the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources, and endorsed its aims and strategy, as had the Fifth Session of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources. These aims and strategy are set out below. Further background information on the genesis of the ICPPGR, and the relationship of the preparatory process of the International Technical Conference with the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources was provided in Document CPGR-Ex1/94/6.
4. The ICPPGR aims to develop consensus and commitment from countries, and from all relevant sectors, for the conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and their use in sustainable development, and, in particular:
 - i) to catalyze action at the country level to promote capacity building, including increased communication and access to information, improved planning and evaluation, the identification of problems and emergency needs, the formulation of projects to address such needs, and the encouragement of regional cooperation and initiatives;
 - ii) to describe, through the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources (SW/PGR), the current situation of plant genetic resources, and identify gaps and needs and propose priorities for action²; and
 - iii) to secure agreement on a Global Plan of Action for plant genetic resources (GPA/PGR), as it emanates from the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, building upon

¹ Project number : GCP/INT/573/MUL.

the outline plan of action of Agenda 21, and for its financing, through an International Fund and other mechanisms, in line with FAO Conference Resolutions 5/89 and 3/91².

Following the International Technical Conference, periodical reports on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and a rolling Global Plan of Action will be produced as part of FAO's regular programme.

5. As the Commission and the FAO Conference have emphasized, the ICPPGR project will support a country-driven process for formulating a concrete Global Plan of Action. This participatory approach is important in developing an innovative, yet practical plan, to which all countries can feel fully committed. The ICPPGR is designed to result not only in countries endorsing a Global Plan of Action, but also in their committing themselves to its timely implementation, with support from both the scientific and political communities.

6. The project has been designed, therefore, to offer a number of opportunities for inputs into the process leading to the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources. Many of these allow for specific country inputs:

- i) the preparation of Country Reports assessing the status of plant genetic resources in each country, focusing on needs, and gaps in institutional capacities for conserving and developing these resources;
- ii) a series of sub-regional and regional meetings, at which countries may present their reports, identify common problems and possible solutions; and discuss draft elements of the Report on the State of the World's plant genetic resources and the Global Plan of Action.
- iii) deliberations of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and its Working Group which provides guidance on the process as a whole and which will review drafts of the State of the World's PGR and the Global Plan of Action; and
- iv) informal channels with countries, including during visits to countries, in which countries have the opportunity to make their views known and provide information.
- v) existing background information including that held in the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources³, complemented by information provided in questionnaires completed by countries, and compiled and analyzed by the FAO Plant Production and Protection Division, the Forest Resources Division, and the ICPPGR Secretariat;
- vi) technical inputs by scientific and other experts through case-studies and issue-analysis papers commissioned by the Secretariat of the ICPPGR, as well as through workshops, an electronic bulletin board system and other informal contacts; and
- vii) inputs coming from complementary activities undertaken by governments, institutions, non-governmental organizations, and others, in support of the ICPPGR process.

7. The following chart summarizes the main steps of the process, with a revised timetable for its implementation as currently envisaged by the ICPPGR Secretariat.

² An outline of the Global Plan of Action for the conservation and sustainable utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is provided for consideration of the Commission in document CPGR-6/95/11.

III. PROGRESS REPORT

1. Establishment of the Project Secretariat, staff support from FAO and IPGRI and appointment of sub-regional consultants

8. Since the last report to the Commission, in November 1994, two new professional staff have joined the ICPPGR Secretariat. The Secretariat now comprises a total of six professional officers (including two associate professional officers provided by countries) and three general service staff. The Secretariat is now regionally balanced and has the capability to operate in all five official languages of the Organization, as well as in several other major African, Asian and European languages. It includes staff with formal academic expertise in agronomy, genetics, genetic resource conservation, plant breeding, and plant genetic resources policy questions, and experience in governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

9. Strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat is being discussed including the secondment of Regular Programme staff. Additional support to the preparatory process is being provided by FAO Regional and Country Representatives, and by Regular Programme staff at FAO Headquarters. This support includes inputs from the technical departments - in particular the Seeds and Plant Genetic Resources Service of the Plant Production and Protection Division and the Forest Resources Development Service of the Forest Resources Division, as well as logistical support, especially in facilitating contact with country focal points and experts, and organizing sub-regional meetings.

10. Building upon the already existing agreements between FAO and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed to ensure substantial, detailed cooperation between the two organizations in the ICPPGR process. Components of the Memorandum cover coordination arrangements, collaboration in country reports preparation, collaboration at regional and sub-regional level, scientific collaboration, and financing and implementation. ICPPGR and IPGRI staff are in close contact on a wide range of technical and scientific topics.

11. In addition, separate Letters of Agreement have been agreed to facilitate assistance from IPGRI in various regions, and for an appropriate transfer of funds to IPGRI for this purpose. In the regions, IPGRI

involvement will largely take the form of assistance to countries in the preparation of country reports, through consultants identified by FAO. Sixteen consultants have been appointed for this task, each one from the sub-region or region concerned.

2. Country and Sub-regional Activities

Country-level contacts

12. Through a Circular State Letter of 30 September 1994, the Director-General formally invited countries to participate in the ICPPGR, to nominate official focal points for the process, and to prepare Country Reports. Follow-up communications have been made via FAO Country Representatives, Countries' Permanent Representatives to FAO and Regional Offices of FAO and IPGRI as required. The person or office designated as the contact point serves as the main liaison with FAO regarding the Country Report, and the overall ICPPGR process. To date (May 1, 1995) 125 countries have nominated focal points. A regional breakdown is provided in Table 1.

13. In order to introduce the ICPPGR to countries, establish practical links with national programmes, determine how best to facilitate the fullest possible national involvement in the ICPPGR, coordinate activities with IPGRI and other organizations, and make an initial assessment of the situation of plant genetic resources in the various regions, project staff have undertaken a number of missions to various regions. Since November 1994, project staff have visited the Caribbean Region, in addition to earlier visits to Eastern and Southern Africa, the Middle East, East and South-East Asia, and Latin America and North America. A total of 31 countries have been visited by project staff, and a further 62 countries have been visited by ICPPGR consultants or by other FAO or IPGRI staff specifically to promote the ICPPGR process.

Preparation of Country Reports

14. Country Reports have been completed or are under preparation in most countries. (Draft or final Country Reports have been received from 48 countries and are known to be under preparation in at least a further 70 countries. The regional breakdown is provided in Table 1.) It is expected that Country Reports will have been received from most countries by the time of the sixth session of the Commission in June. To be of optimal use in the ICPPGR process, Country Reports need to be completed as soon as possible, to allow them to be used as inputs for the sub-regional meetings and for the major project documents.

Table 1	Number of countries and percentage of total							
	Region	Total	Focal Point Confirmed		Country Reports received or known to be under preparation		Country Reports received (Draft or Final)	
Africa, South of Sahara	47	32	68%	30	64%	13	28%	
Americas	35	29	83%	25	71%	4	11%	
Asia and Pacific	28	24	86%	14	50%	6	21%	
Europe	36	26	72%	28	78%	20	56%	
N. Africa, W. and Central Asia	29	14	48%	15	52%	10	34%	
Total	175	125	71%	112	64%	53	30%	

15. Through Country Reports, countries assess the status of their plant genetic resources, describe their activities for their conservation and utilization, and identify gaps, needs and priorities. The reports will be a major input to the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, and the first Global Plan of Action. It is also hoped that the process of preparing Country Reports will provide a positive stimulus to national programme capacity building, evaluation and planning.

16. Whilst the crucial responsibility for producing country reports, in a timely fashion, lies with the countries themselves, the ICPPGR, in cooperation with IPGRI's regional offices, is providing limited planning and technical assistance to countries in this work, particularly through visits of IPGRI staff and project consultants. Additionally limited funds have been made available to 24 countries to defray partially in-country expenses for producing Country Reports such as the costs of convening of National Workshops.

17. Country Reports received so far indicate a positive response by countries to the ICPPGR process. Most reports received are relatively comprehensive, though concise. The "Introductory Guidelines" which were distributed under cover of the Circular State Letter of 30 September 1994, have been followed to a large extent in the drafting of most country reports. However, coverage of utilization of plant genetic resources, tends to be minimal, in comparison with coverage afforded to conservation activities. Where possible, the Secretariat is advising countries of the wish of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources to give adequate attention to aspects of PGR activities related to utilization in the development of the GPA/PGR and SW/PGR⁴, and the consequent need to provide sufficient coverage of these issues in the Country Reports.

Sub-regional Meetings and the Preparation of Sub-regional Syntheses

18. Sub-regional and regional meetings provide a further important opportunity for individual countries to make an input, and for dialogue between countries in the process of developing the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action. At these meetings, governments can identify and discuss common problems and opportunities, through the presentation of the Country Reports. Sub-regional and regional meetings have been re-scheduled for the second half of 1995 in order to allow for more time for the completion of Country Reports by countries. This new schedule will also allow for elements of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, and the Global Plan of Action to be reviewed at these meetings.

19. The sub-regional and regional meetings are expected to:

- . review Country Reports and agree sub-regional synthesis reports;
- . identify needs and gaps in the countries of the sub-region or region, develop a consensus around these, and develop project concepts and identify potential funding opportunities where feasible and appropriate;
- . review the framework or preliminary drafts of the SW/PGR and GPA/PGR; identify key policy concerns and formulate recommendations as appropriate; and
- . promote the interchange of relevant expertise and experience.

20. The main tangible outputs of the sub-regional and regional meetings are expected to be:

- . sub-regional synthesis reports on the status of genetic diversity, PGR activities, gaps and needs in the respective sub-regions;

- . other, specific, inputs to the SW/PGR and GPA/PGR such as identification of special areas of activity recommended for action in the GPA/PGR; and
- . comments on the frameworks or preliminary drafts of the SW/PGR and GPA/PGR.

21. The meetings will also help to build consensus for the SW/PGR and GPA/PGR from governments of the region and from relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations, and lead to greater commitment to the aims of the 1996 International Technical Conference itself.

22. Arrangements for sub-regional and regional meetings are currently being finalized in conjunction with host countries, local FAO offices, IPGRI and other collaborating institutions. Meetings will be held in Beijing, China (July 24 - 26 for East Asia), San José, Costa Rica (August 21 - 24 for Meso-America and the Caribbean), Brasilia, Brazil (August 29 - September 1 for South America) Nitra, Slovakia (September 24-27 for Europe) Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran (October 9-12 for Central and Western Asia), Tunis, Tunisia (September 16-20 for the Mediterranean). Further meetings will be held between July and October for North America, South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific, West and Central Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa, provided that appropriate cooperating organizations are identified. Major technical issues for discussion for the sub-regional meetings are now being identified in cooperation with countries. However, countries themselves will have the major responsibility for organizing their input into the meetings and for ensuring their participation. Within the limit of financial resources, ICPPGR will contribute to the cost of participation of developing countries. Full details of the dates and venues of all meetings will be issued as a supplement to this document at the meeting of the Commission.

23. Brazil, Iran and Slovakia are providing financial support for the meetings which they are hosting in addition to the normal host country responsibilities. Much logistical and technical support for the sub-regional and regional meetings is being provided by other organizations. As detailed below (para. 26 and 27) some meetings are being co-organized with existing PGR regional and sub-regional networks. The respective regional offices of IPGRI are providing major logistical support, particularly in Europe and Africa. For the Latin America and Caribbean region, an inter-agency meeting was held in San José, Costa Rica, on March 2, 1995, under the general coordination of FAO/ICPPGR, in order to discuss the institutional contribution of some organizations from Latin America and the Caribbean, as requested by the participating institutions. The following organizations participated: the IPGRI Regional Office for the Americas (IPGRI/Americas), the Interamerican Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA), the Tropical Agriculture Centre for Research and Education (CATIE), the Secretariat for the Latin American Economic System (SELA), and FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO/RLAC), and each one committed itself to support to the preparatory process in various ways.

24. Participation of relevant regional and non-governmental organizations at the sub-regional meetings is being promoted. For several of the sub-regional meetings, it is expected that NGOs will organize their own meetings prior to the sub-regional meetings in order to facilitate their inputs into the preparatory process.

Cooperation with established PGR Networks

25. The preparation of Country Reports, and the planning or organization of Sub-regional meetings, are being carried out in collaboration with the established plant genetic resources networks in each region. The inputs to the process provided through the meetings of the East Asia PGR Network (August 1994) and WANANET - the PGR network of West Asia and North Africa (October 1994) were reported to the Commission at its last session (CPGR-Ex1/94/6).

26. The sub-regional meeting for Europe is being organized in collaboration with the European Cooperative Programme for Genetic Resources (ECP/GR) and the European Forest Genetic Resources Network (EUFORGEN), and will be held immediately after the Executive Committee meeting of ECP/GR. The sub-regional meeting for Southern Africa is being organized in conjunction with the PGR Programme of the Southern Africa Development Council (SADC) and will take place immediately after a meeting of the SADC PGR Programme.

27. For the Latin America and Caribbean region, meetings of the PGR networks are being held so that countries can review their draft Country Reports, define critical issues to be discussed in the sub-regional meeting for South America, and discuss relevant PGR activities which may be proposed as sub-regional projects under the Global Plan of Action. The first such meeting was held from 19-21 April, 1995, in Montevideo, Uruguay, by the Plant Genetic Resources Network of the *Programa Cooperativo para el Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario del Cono Sur* (PROCISUR). The other plant genetic resources networks of the Latin America and the Caribbean region are organizing special sessions for the same purposes during the following meetings: for both the Andean Plant Genetic Resources Network (REDARFIT), which belongs to the *Programa Cooperativo de Investigación y Transferencia de Tecnología Agropecuaria para la Subregión Andina* (PROCIANDINO), and the Amazonian Plant Genetic Resources Network (TROPIGEN), which belongs to the *Programa Cooperativo de Investigación y Transferencia de Tecnología Agropecuaria para los Trópicos Suramericanos* (PROCITROPICOS) from 2-5 May, 1995, in Cali, Colombia; for the Meso-American Plant Genetic Resources Network (REMERFI) in late May or early June, and for the Caribbean Committee for the Management of Plant Genetic Resources (CMPGR), during the Thirty-first Annual Meeting of the Caribbean Food Crop Society, in Barbados, 9-14 July, 1995.

3. Technical Inputs to the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action

28. Outlines of the Report on the State of the World's PGR and the Global Plan of Action have been prepared for discussion by the Commission as noted above. These outlines provide frameworks for the preparation of the two documents and provide indicative examples of their contents without prejudice to the preparatory process.

29. The Outline of the Report on the State of the World's PGR (CPGR-6/95/10) proposes that the Report addresses three main areas: the "State of Diversity" assessing the state of conservation, erosion and utilization of plant genetic resources; the "State of the Art" surveying scientific, technical, legal and other methodologies and tools for the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources; and the "State of Capacity" reviewing the state of human resources, institutional structures, and capacity to use relevant methodologies and tools, for the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources, at the community, national, (sub-)regional, and global levels. The main findings of the Report would be summarized in a concluding part. Each of the three main parts will include an assessment of the gaps and needs for improving the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources including an identification of the major constraints to conservation, utilization and exchange, and an evaluation of the extent to which plant genetic resources are used and developed, identifying in particular problems which hinder their full utilization for plant breeding.

30. The Outline of the Global Plan of Action proposes to organize the Plan into three main sections: Part I, Framework for Action would provide the rationale for the Plan including aims, principles strategy, major areas of action, criteria and priorities for the allocation of funds and an indicative budget. Part II would be the main technical body of the report providing details of the activities of the Plan. Part III would provide the Policy Recommendations required, in conjunction with the Activities of Part II, to meet the objectives of the Plan. Additionally there would be a preamble or Declaration, and an annex containing a provisional project portfolio with indicative projects and programmes. The Outline has been

developed consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Undertaking, and builds upon the recommendations of the relevant parts of Agenda 21.

General Technical Inputs

31. An internal research effort has been initiated to address gaps in information required for the elaboration of the Report on the State of the World's PGR and the Global Plan of Action. The relative FAO technical units in the Agriculture, Economic and Social, Forestry and Sustainable Development Departments are assisting the ICPPGR project in this task. In line with the Commission's guidance, inputs are also being sought from all relevant organizations and institutions dealing with conservation, and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources, especially the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and its International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs), particularly IPGRI, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the governing body of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and relevant non-governmental organizations.

32. Project staff have held a number of detailed working sessions with staff of IPGRI and other IARCs to identify and discuss other key issues for the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action, and to identify gaps where further studies and other inputs are required. The publications and workshops referred to in the next sections of this report are amongst the important inputs provided by IPGRI. Other topics for which IPGRI is providing substantial input include assessment of genetic diversity and monitoring of genetic erosion.

33. There are a large number of complementary activities being carried out by governments and other organizations in support of the ICPPGR which provide important inputs to the process. In addition to the technical workshops described in the following section, such complementary activities include the mapping of rare plants of importance as food sources, or as wild relatives of crop plants being organized by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and work on seed regulatory frameworks by the Overseas Development Institute (United Kingdom). Support is also envisaged from French agencies: *Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement* (CIRAD); *L'Institut français de Recherche scientifique pour le Développement en Coopération* (ORSTOM); *Institut national de la Recherche agronomique* (INRA); and *Bureau des Ressources génétiques* (BRG).

34. Inputs from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) include contributions from the Intermediate Technology Development Group and several other non-governmental organizations, on the plant genetic resource conservation and utilization activities of farmers' organizations and other non-governmental organizations. The "Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation Programme" of several NGOs has agreed to cooperate fully with the ICPPGR.

35. FAO, through its ICPPGR Project will work with other UN Agencies, international development banks, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), to develop "concept notes" and cost estimates of projects suitable for the Global Plan of Action. The Secretariat has been invited by the International Fund for Agricultural Development to cooperate in this regard.

Conferences and Meetings on Technical Subjects

36. An International Workshop on the Genetic Resources of Boreal Zone Forest Species is being organized by the Petatawa National Institute of the Canadian Forest Service, in technical collaboration with FAO, especially the Forestry Department (June 19 - 22, 1995, Toronto, Canada). A Workshop on Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources of the North American Temperate Zone, is being Organized by the Institute of Forest Genetics, Pacific Southwest Research Station of the USDA Forest Service, in technical collaboration with FAO (12-14 June 1995, Berkeley, California, USA). Both meetings will provide important inputs to the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action.

37. A meeting on participatory plant breeding funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and co-sponsored by IDRC, IPGRI and FAO is being held in July 1995. The Workshop will focus in particular on initiatives within the International Agricultural Research Centres to involve farmers in plant breeding⁵.

38. IPGRI, with the support and participation of FAO, is planning to hold a number of technical workshops as inputs to the preparatory process. These will cover the following topics: seed regeneration, germplasm health, *in vitro* genebanks, field genebanks, and options for national programme organization. Most of these workshops will result in published inputs to the preparatory process.

39. Electronic conferences, being established by the ICCPGR Secretariat through a bulletin board network (BBN, see para. 45 and 46), will also provide technical inputs to the process.

Publications

40. IPGRI and other IARCs are providing inputs to the ICPPGR, through a number of publications, including a study on under-utilized crops, and a study of the extent of *ex situ* conservation efforts for the Centres' mandate crops. A book on *in situ* conservation, providing a state of the art review of current issues, opportunities, methods and activities is also under preparation. FAO, IPGRI, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and UNEP are completing a handbook on collecting which will provide another important input.

41. A number of important technical studies of relevance to critical issues in the elaboration of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, and Global Plan of Action, are being commissioned, or otherwise encouraged. Additionally a number of studies commissioned by the Secretariat of the Commission in the context of the Revision of the International Undertaking and by IPGRI provide useful inputs. It is anticipated that a number of these studies will be published by FAO, or jointly with IPGRI, in order to broaden discussion of important issues, and stimulate creative analysis and problem-solving.

4. Cooperation with other institutions, communications and outreach

Cooperation with institutions of the Convention on Biological Diversity

42. The Project Manager attended the first session of the Conference of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity in the Bahamas, making contact with many delegations (see also document CPGR-6/95/4 Annex). The Conference of the Parties agreed that the first meeting of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (4 - 8 September, 1995) would include as an agenda item on how "the Convention on Biological Diversity [can] contribute to the preparation for the forthcoming International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture". It was also agreed that the Conference of the Parties, at its second session in November 1995, should be informed about preparations for the Conference. In line with the request of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, FAO is currently discussing with the Interim Secretariat for the Convention optimal modalities for such reporting.

Cooperation with the International Agricultural Research Centres

43. In addition to the various concrete forms of cooperation with IPGRI and other IARCs described elsewhere in this report, the Project Manager participated in the first meeting of the CGIAR's Inter-Centre Working Group since the establishment of a System-wide Genetic Resources Programme. Staff of all relevant International Agricultural Research Centres present agreed to provide information of the status of genetic resources for their mandate crops as well as other technical inputs.

Cooperation with Non-governmental organizations and the private sector

44. Project staff have held several meetings with representatives of various non-governmental organizations, including representatives of the seed industry. A seminar, "NGOs and biodiversity: moving from basic agreement to concrete action and justice" organized, hosted and funded by the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, brought together 29 participants from 17 countries to discuss NGO involvement in the International Technical Conference and related events. Several NGOs committed themselves to provide inputs for the Report on the State of the World's PGR and the Global Plan of Action, and initiated plans to hold an NGO Forum in conjunction with the International Technical Conference. Project staff also participated in the NGO Forum on Biodiversity held on the occasion of the first session of the Conference of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Communications and outreach activities

45. To promote the broadest participation in the preparatory process, the ICPPGR Secretariat, in cooperation with the FAO Computing Service, is establishing an electronic bulletin board network (BBN) to allow interested participants from many institutions, universities, research centres, NGOs and others to contribute to the preparation of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action. The BBN supports conventional electronic mail access linked to a bulletin board system (for those with direct access via the *Internet* or by modem) and a web server. This system will be complemented by the distribution of printed material by conventional mail for participants in the ICPPGR process without access to electronic communication systems.

46. The BBN provides access to electronic conferences, documents and reports. At a later date it will also provide access to relevant databases. Electronic conference subjects will include: genetic diversity assessment, *ex situ* conservation, *in situ* conservation, plant breeding, seed production and distribution. Drafts of the major documents for the Fourth International Technical Conference will be posted on the bulletin board system as they are prepared. The project will establish a World Wide Web server in order to provide readily accessible information via the Internet about the International Technical Conference, its preparatory process and the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Plan of Action. All interested individuals and organizations are requested to contact the Secretariat for further information.

47. The Project Secretariat is also expanding and updating a set of informal briefing papers, and preparing a new set of overhead projections, in order to explain the project and related activities to a wider audience. With the assistance of the FAO Information Material Production Branch and IPGRI, a promotional leaflet and a set of posters are also being prepared and other public awareness materials are being organized. A series of documentaries on various issues in plant genetic resources, under preparation by the Television Trust for the Environment in cooperation with IPGRI and the CGIAR System-wide Genetic Resources, will be released in time for the Fourth International Technical Conference.

5. Organization for the Fourth International Technical

Conference and associated activities

48. FAO is currently finalizing an agreement with the Government of Germany concerning the hosting of the Fourth International Technical Conference. Germany has established a National Committee to coordinate national preparatory activities.

49. Invitations will be issued by FAO to all countries which are members of the United Nations, its specialized agencies or the International Atomic Energy Agency. UN agencies, the World Bank, Regional Development Banks, and other relevant international intergovernmental organizations and relevant international non-governmental organizations, including from the private sector, will be invited as observers. Such non-governmental organizations with an interest in attending the Conference should contact the ICPPGR Secretariat. An agenda for the International Technical Conference is provided in CPGR-6/95/14.

50. A number of NGOs are planning to hold an NGO Forum immediately prior to the Fourth International Technical Conference. A contact group including NGOs from all regions is coordinating preparations for the Forum. Discussions are also taking place with a press agency to provide a daily conference newspaper.

IV. FUNDING SITUATION

51. The budget for the ICPPGR project is US \$6,586,473. This budget covers only core costs of the preparatory process which are funded by direct donor contributions⁶. Contributions to the ICPPGR project budget to date total some US\$ 5.1 million, comprising contributions from nine countries (See Table 2). This leaves US\$ 1.5 million, or 18% of the budget, still to be committed.

52. In addition to the project budget, France and Canada are each providing the ICPPGR Secretariat with the services of an Associate Professional Officer, and Canada has organized and financed a workshop for Francophone Africa, and is supporting the workshop on Boreal Forest Genetic Resources. Also separate from the project budget, are in-kind contributions from countries hosting sub-regional and regional meetings. Brazil, Iran and Slovakia are making financial contributions over and above the normal responsibilities of host countries. A table summarizing these and other contributions will be provided as a supplement to this report.

53. In addition to its contribution of US\$ 1,665,000 for the ICPPGR preparatory process, Germany is also contributing approximately US\$ 800,000 to the cost of hosting the Conference itself, and to project-related national activities, which makes Germany's total commitment approximately US\$ 2.5 million.

54. Additional resources are required to finance the participation of developing countries in the Conference itself. The Commission on Plant Genetic Resources recommended that at least two delegates per country should attend the Conference, in order to ensure the presence of both technical experts and policy makers. A preliminary estimate has been prepared on the basis of estimated average travel and *per diem* costs of two delegates for each of 100 developing countries with a budget of US\$ 881,400. To date about US\$ 150,000 has been committed for this purpose by one donor (The Netherlands). Further financial resources are required to support the participation of developing countries in sessions of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and its Working Group.

Table 2 Level of current contributions to the ICPPGR (Project GCP/INT/573/MUL)

Donor	Amount provided or committed (US\$)
Germany	1,665,000
Sweden	961,894
Norway	136,705
Spain	100,000
Japan	247,773
France	300,000
Italy	200,000
United States	1,050,000
Netherlands	457,000*
Total Committed	5,118,372
<i>Amount to be raised</i>	1,468,101
Total Budget	6,586,473
 <i>Note: the figure marked * is an estimate based on a commitment and is subject to variation due to exchange rate fluctuations</i>	

V. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

55. The Commission is invited to provide guidance on all aspects of the preparatory process. The preparatory process for the Fourth International Technical Conference is well underway. However, by the time of the meeting of the Commission at its sixth session, the Conference will be only one year away, exactly. Every effort needs to be made, therefore, both by the secretariat and by the countries which are participating in the process, to ensure the timely completion of the various steps in the process. Countries which have not yet completed their Country Reports will need to do so promptly if they are to have a meaningful participation in the process. Countries will also need to be well prepared for the sub-regional meetings which will commence soon after the meeting of the Commission. The Commission might wish to offer its guidance concerning the inputs and expected outputs of these meetings.

56. All steps in the process depend on adequate financing. Whilst the financial position of the ICPPGR project has improved substantially since the last meeting of the Commission, US\$ 1.5 million is still short. If further contributions are not forthcoming soon, the ability of the secretariat to plan ahead and to make the necessary commitments for the execution of the necessary plans, will be constrained still further. Additionally, resources, of the order of US\$ 700,000 are still required to support the participation of developing countries in the Fourth International Technical Conference itself. To allow for adequate planning such resources will be required during the next four months. The Commission has earlier affirmed that two representatives from each country be encouraged to attend the International Technical Conference, so that both policy and technical aspects can be addressed adequately. However, the Commission might wish to discuss which criteria should be used in the case that sufficient funds are not forthcoming.

57. The Global Plan of Action, as noted in Document CPGR-6/95/11, is likely to require additional financial resources for its implementation, in line with FAO Conference Resolution 3/91. Without

prejudice to negotiations in progress in the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and elsewhere concerning financing, and additional to efforts underway to provide estimates of the financial requirements for the implementation of the Plan, the Commission might wish to provide guidance to the Secretariat on the approaches to be taken to identify possible sources of financing and to secure financial support to allow the implementation of the Plan.

¹ Reports of the Conference of FAO: C91/REP, para 113 and C93/REP, para 110.

² An outline of the Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources is provided for consideration of the Commission in document CPGR-6/95/10.

³ See document CPGR-6/95/13

⁴ CPGR-Ex1/94/REP para 19.

⁵ Along with commissioned studies, and expertise within FAO, this workshop will provide inputs to a forward-looking report to the Commission, being prepared by the Secretariat, as part of the preparations for the Report on the State of the World's PGR. In line with the request of the Commission at its first extra-ordinary session, this report will examine technical and scientific questions, especially on sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and will include a study on new approaches to plant breeding, which draw upon a wider range of genetic material, and allow the maintenance of a wider genetic base in crops.

⁶ This budget does not, for example, include provisions for Secretariat expenses after the end of June 1996, the month in which the Conference is to be held. Nor does the budget cover the cost of the Conference itself; travel and *per diem* costs of developing country participants in the Conference; contributions from the FAO Regular Programme, and from member countries, in the form of the provision of Associated Professional Officers; support to sub-regional meetings from host countries, and the costs of complementary activities which, while supportive of the ICPPGR, are not integral or core activities included in the project document and its budget. An estimate of all costs and contributions will be provided in a supplement to this document.