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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Item 12 of the Provisional Agenda

Twentieth Regular Session

Rome, 24–28 March 2025

REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Treaty) has prepared this report on developments of relevance to the ongoing consideration of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) by Members of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission). This report is based on, and updates, an earlier version provided to the Commission's Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in November 2024.
2. This report contains a summary of major outcomes of the Tenth Session of the Governing Body (GB-10), held in November 2023, and of progress with relevant processes of International Treaty's subsidiary bodies.¹
3. The International Treaty now has 154 Contracting Parties, including the European Union, the most recent being Bahrain, Colombia, and South Africa.

II. OUTCOMES OF THE TENTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY AND PROGRESS WITH RELEVANT INTERSESSIONAL PROCESSES

4. The Tenth Session of the Governing Body adopted seventeen Resolutions. The summary below presents the Commission with the outcomes of GB-10 on selected thematic areas.

A. Cooperation with the Commission

5. In line with established practice, the Governing Body adopted a separate Resolution on the Cooperation with the Commission, namely Resolution 11/2023. The Governing Body welcomed the ongoing close cooperation with Commission and the joint activities undertaken by their Secretariats. It agreed to keep the matter of the functional division of tasks and activities between the Governing Body and the Commission under review.
6. In Resolution 11/2023, the Governing Body invited Contracting Parties to cooperate with the Commission in the preparation of the Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Third Report) in order to facilitate the updating of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Second GPA).
7. The Governing Body requested the Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Secretary of the Commission to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies, and in particular with regard to:
 - i. the finalization of the Third Report;
 - ii. the updating of Second GPA, including through regional consultations for identifying gaps, needs and priorities, and the revision of the reporting system of the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS) and the Global Information System (GLIS);
 - iii. the organization of symposia addressing in situ, ex situ and on-farm conservation of PGRFA using virtual conferencing tools;
 - iv. the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations, including a scoping study, based on the availability of additional financial resources, by external partners on the impact of such policies, laws and regulations;
 - v. the implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic

¹ The documents and the final report of the Tenth Session are available at: <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/1618930/>. Resolution 11/2023, *Cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, is available on the webpage in the six official FAO languages.

Resources for Food and Agriculture, and work on sustainable use of PGRFA, including to strengthen crop breeding systems and crop improvement capacity;

- vi. assembling relevant information for measuring and monitoring monetary and non-monetary benefit-sharing, within their respective mandates and existing frameworks;
- vii. access and benefit-sharing and digital sequence information/genetic sequence data (DSI/GSD) on PGRFA, including virtual and/or in-person open-ended workshops, as appropriate, with a view to sharing information about gaps in knowledge and technical capacity-building needs and activities related to DSI/GSD;
- viii. joint efforts to advocate for the consideration of the objectives and relevant work and policies of the Commission and the Governing Body of the International Treaty in global strategies and frameworks, such as the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), as well as to update FAO Members on progress in the implementation of their respective mandates and work programmes;
- ix. GLIS and WIEWS, and relevant targets and indicators; and
- x. the development and implementation of national strategies for PGRFA, in close collaboration with the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty.

8. The Secretariat of the International Treaty co-organized, with FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division, six regional consultations on the review of the Second GPA. The Secretariat supported the participation of the respective National Focal Points of the International Treaty. The consultations included the discussion of priorities for the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.

B. Conservation and Sustainable Use

9. In Resolution 6/2023, the Governing Body, inter alia, thanked the Ad Hoc Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use for defining future strategies to support countries in the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the International Treaty through the possible development or establishment of voluntary guidelines, including through a global symposium and expert input or small groups.

10. The Governing Body took note of the revised Concept Note of the Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for Sustainable Use of PGRFA and welcomed the efforts of the Secretary to implement the new prototype of the online Toolbox for Sustainable Use of PGRFA.

11. The Governing Body requested the Secretary to continue analyzing and monitoring the identified gaps and needs highlighted in the Background Study on the Bottlenecks and Challenges to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6. The Governing Body called upon Contracting Parties to share information on the difficulties and challenges encountered in implementation, as well as possible new initiatives, activities, and approaches that could be undertaken to address them.

12. The Governing Body requested the Secretary, subject to the availability of financial resources, to organize regional consultations on implementation, with a particular focus on identified bottlenecks and possible approaches to address them, as well as to continue facilitating training and capacity building.

13. The Governing Body decided to reconvene the Ad Hoc Committee to advise the Secretariat on the implementation of Articles 5 and 6. In October, the Ad Hoc Committee held the first of the two meetings programmed for the biennium. Among other matters, the Committee discussed current work and future strategies to support countries in implementation based on areas of action of the Joint Programme, and received an outline of the draft voluntary guidelines. The Committee advised on how to promote cooperation, mainstreaming and partnerships, including with the Commission, as well as

on support to global crop conservation strategies under the coordination of the Global Crop Diversity Trust.²

C. Farmers' Rights

14. In Resolution 7/2023, the Governing Body, inter alia, welcomed the publication of the *Options for Encouraging, Guiding and Promoting the Realization of Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty* (Options). It invited Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders, especially farmers' organizations, to continue submitting to the Secretary, for inclusion in the Inventory, experiences and best practices for national implementation.

15. The Governing Body also took note of the annotated outline for the assessment of the state of implementation of Article 9, and requested Contracting Parties and other interested stakeholders, especially farmers' organizations, to submit inputs and comments on the annotated outline. The Governing Body requested the Secretary to carry out and finalize the assessment of the state of implementation of Article 9, and present the full report to the Governing Body.

16. The Governing Body decided to reconvene the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights in order to: review and agree to the outline for the assessment; review the assessment and provide conclusions for the Eleventh Session of the Governing Body; and provide advice to the Eleventh Session of the Governing Body on the use of the Options.

17. With regard to capacity building for implementation, advocacy and communication, the Governing Body invited Contracting Parties and relevant organizations to take initiatives to convene regional workshops and other consultations including among different regions within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation. The Governing Body requested the Secretary to strengthen, to the extent feasible, collaboration between the International Treaty and other units and partners that work for the promotion of Farmers' Rights within and outside FAO, and the broader United Nations including with international human rights bodies and the relevant targets of the GBF, in order to promote the protection and realization of Farmers' Rights. The Governing Body also invited Contracting Parties to promote sustainable biodiverse production systems and facilitate participatory approaches such as community seed banks, community biodiversity registries, participatory plant breeding and seed fairs, including considering providing legal recognition of such approaches as tools for realizing Farmer's Rights.

18. In June, the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group held its first of the two meetings programmed in the biennium. The Expert Group agreed on the outline for the assessment. It discussed the relevance of new technologies and how they could impact on Farmers' Rights. It also discussed the issue of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The Expert Group agreed that both topics could become part of future discussions.³

19. The second meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group in the biennium is scheduled for June 2025.

D. Digital sequence information / Genetic sequence data

20. In Resolution 16/2023, the Governing Body, inter alia, requested the Secretary to continue monitoring developments in all relevant international fora with regard to DSI/GSD and to support the subsidiary bodies, in particular those relating to the enhancement of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, Farmers' Rights, and Sustainable Use, in taking into account related developments when addressing the issue of DSI/GSD.

² The report of the meeting is available at: <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/1679036/>.

³ The report of the meeting is available at: <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/1679035/>.

21. The Governing Body further requested the Secretary to continue coordinating with the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Commission in any activities related to DSI/GSD, in order to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of work.

22. The Governing Body invited Contracting Parties and other stakeholders to provide information on activities to promote technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, training and capacity development, and scientific cooperation to reduce the existing gap on capacity regarding DSI/GSD between developed and developing countries, for consideration by the Governing Body at its Eleventh Session.

E. Operation and Enhancement of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing

23. In Resolution 2/2023, the Governing Body, inter alia, requested the Secretariat to continue its collaboration with the Secretariat of the Commission on updating the report on the availability of material in the Multilateral System, including reasons why there are Contracting Parties that have not placed any material in the Multilateral System.

24. The Governing Body invited Contracting Parties and other holders of material to use, on a voluntary basis, the Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) of the GLIS for the identification of material available in the Multilateral System. It also took note of the progress made since the Ninth Session with Easy-SMTA and the Data Store and requests the Secretary to continue to maintain the help-desk function on the operations of the Multilateral System.

25. Through Resolution 3/2023, the Governing Body, inter alia, reaffirmed the mandate of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System, to finalize the enhancement by the Eleventh Session in 2025.

26. The Governing Body requested the Co-Chairs of the Working Group to give early attention to three identified “hotspots”, namely: DSI/GSD; the expansion of Annex I; payment structure and rates.

27. Following GB-10, the Working Group held its eleventh meeting in April 2024. In relation to DSI/GSD, the Working Group agreed to consider the possibility of developing a specialized approach for DSI/GSD on PGRFA under the International Treaty, while monitoring the relevant processes under the CBD, to ensure mutual supportiveness. In the views of the Working Group, any solution should not restrict facilitated access to PGRFA or open access to DSI/GSD on PGRFA and should seek to exclude double payments by users.⁴

28. The twelfth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group took place in September 2024. The Working Group undertook a first reading of Co-Chairs’ proposal containing the Draft Resolution, the revised SMTA and the draft text for the amendment to the list of crops covered by the Multilateral System. It agreed to use the texts as the basis for further work at its next meeting.

29. The Working Group reviewed the section on DSI/GSD in the Draft Resolution. It reiterated that any proposals that address DSI/GSD within the International Treaty should aim at being mutually supportive with a possible mechanism developed under the CBD, including to avoid duplicative payments and obligations.⁵

30. Further work planned by the Working Group includes two more formal meetings in 2025, the first one of which is scheduled for April.

F. Global Information System

31. In Resolution 5/2023, the Governing Body, inter alia, took note of the collaboration with WIEWS, Genesys, Web-SDIS, the DivSeek International Network, EURISCO, and the CGIAR

⁴ The report of the meeting is available at:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8ffa72f6-126e-48cd-b576-51f0e7d4032a/content>.

⁵ The report of the meeting is available at:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/8913618c-eac9-46c1-9797-5be3db68594a/content>.

Genebank Initiative on PGRFA documentation and invites the Secretary to continue the collaboration with these entities and systems to enhance synergies and mutual support.

32. The Governing Body reconvened the GLIS Scientific Advisory Committee with the same terms of reference as the previous biennium, and requested the Committee to continue considering scientific and technical issues related to the conservation and use of PGRFA with relevance to DSI/GSD, as they relate to Article 17 of the International Treaty, and the implications of the relevant outcomes of the CBD COP and their implementation on the GLIS Programme of Work in future years. In particular, the Governing Body requested its Secretary to provide a report to the Committee and the Eleventh Session of the Governing Body on relevant updates on documentation and information exchange of PGRFA in the context of the GBF.

33. The Governing Body also requested the Secretary to advance on the exchange of relevant information and links with the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House in the context of the GLIS Programme of Work.

34. The meeting of the GLIS Scientific Advisory Committee is scheduled for May 2025.

G. Cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity

35. A resolution by the Governing Body, on the role of PGRFA within the GBF, addressed the general relationship with the GBF. Another resolution, on cooperation with the CBD, addressed various interfaces between the International Treaty and the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol.

36. Through Resolution 1/2023, the Governing Body welcomed the GBF and acknowledged the synergetic implementation of the goals, targets of the GBF and the objectives of the GBF as particularly relevant to sustainable food systems. Among other matters, the Governing Body invited Contracting Parties to the International Treaty to encourage effective liaison between the respective national focal points in national processes related to GBF implementation, and mainstream the implementation of the International Treaty within National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

37. The Governing Body also emphasised the importance of developing a monitoring framework for the GBF that relies, inter alia, on established monitoring systems and reporting processes, including those related to PGRFA.

38. Through Resolution 13/2023, the Governing Body specifically focused on cooperation with the CBD. In relation to the GBF, the Governing Body took note of the Bern process on cooperation and coordination among Parties to the biodiversity-related conventions. It welcomed the adoption of a strategy for resource mobilization to support the implementation of the GBF as well as the establishment of the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund.

39. In relation to the mainstreaming of issues related to PGRFA into NBSAPs, the Governing Body requested its Secretary to explore facilitative measures.

40. With regard to general cooperation among the Secretariats, the Governing Body requested its Secretary to continue exploring with the Secretariat of the CBD, practical means and activities to further enhance this cooperation, including by renewing the Memorandum of Cooperation and developing joint initiatives between the two Secretariats, as well as to cooperate with the Executive Secretary of the CBD by providing information on developments and practical implementation experiences within the International Treaty.

41. With regard to DSI/GSD on genetic resources, the Governing Body requested its Secretary to collaborate and, as appropriate, coordinate with the Secretariat of the CBD in order to promote coherence and mutual supportiveness between the respective conventions and implementing processes.

H. Contribution of FAO to the Implementation of the International Treaty

42. In Resolution 9/2023, the Governing Body, inter alia, emphasized the importance of FAO's continued assistance with the implementation of the International Treaty at the national level. It

invited FAO to recognize the importance of the implementation of the Treaty at the national level, and to continue supporting the efforts to increase the membership of the International Treaty.

43. The Governing Body welcomed progress made in the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and its 2021-23 Action Plan, and noted the important role of the Strategy as coordination mechanism for activities through which FAO supports countries in integrating biodiversity, including the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture and other components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture, into relevant programmes, policies and legislation. It invited FAO to take into consideration new developments within the International Treaty in the review and updating of the Action Plan and to integrate the relevant components of the International Treaty into the implementation of initiatives and strategies.

44. The Governing Body took note of the current efforts of the FAO Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment to enhance synergies and mutual support among its component teams in order to improve synergies in delivering on and contributing to the overall Strategic Objectives of FAO.

I. Multi-Year Programme of Work

45. In Resolution 15/2023, the Governing Body approved the MYPoW 2024–2029. For the Eleventh Session of the Governing Body in 2025, the MYPoW foresees, among other matters, the participation in the process of updating the Second GPA.

K. The Funding Strategy

46. In Resolution 4/2023 on the Funding Strategy, the Governing Body, inter alia, invited relevant international mechanisms, funds and bodies, stakeholder groups and other international organizations to provide information to the Secretariat that would enable the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy to better leverage funding from all sources for International Treaty implementation and the delivery of non-monetary benefit-sharing.

47. The delivery of non-monetary benefit-sharing will be monitored by the methodology for measuring non-monetary benefit-sharing, which is being finalized and will be tested in the biennium under the guidance of the Standing Committee.

48. The Standing Committee held its first meeting of the biennium in June 2024. Among other tasks, the Standing Committee updated its workstreams in the light of the timeline of the Funding Strategy, extended to 2027.⁶

49. At its second meeting of November 2024, the Standing Committee, among other tasks, held discussions on the outcomes of the Sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the CBD. Requests by the Standing Committee to the Secretariat included continuing to closely liaise with the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Unit of the FAO Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment and the CBD Secretariat in the development and implementation of monitoring framework of the GBF related to PGRFA and the International Treaty.

50. In relation to NBSAPs, the Standing Committee noted the progressively higher attention to PGRFA and the International Treaty in the biodiversity policy agenda. It emphasized the importance of FAO, the Secretariat and other International Treaty partners to work together to increase the integration of PGRFA in national biodiversity targets, and to support countries that have yet not done so to update or revise their NBSAPs with a view to including PGRFA.⁷

⁶ The report of the meeting is available at:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b9e5e255-b7b2-40f7-af90-1c9ec3d3fc82/content>.

⁷ The report of the meeting is available at:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9ce111d6-3328-402f-9684-6d27d5466714/content>.

51. The third and final meeting of the Standing Committee for the biennium is scheduled for June 2025.

L. Eleventh Session of the Governing Body

52. The Governing Body elected Mr. Alwin Kypse (Europe Region) as Chairperson of the Eleventh Session of the Governing Body.

53. The Eleventh Session will take place in Lima, Peru, from 24 to 29 November 2025.

III. CONCLUSION

54. In accordance with the request of the Governing Body at its Tenth Session, the Secretariat of the International Treaty will continue working closely with the Secretariat of the Commission on joint activities and areas of common interest. The Secretariat will also bring to the attention of the Governing Body, at its upcoming Eleventh Session, any relevant discussions and outcomes of this Twentieth Regular Session of the Commission.