



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



**International Treaty
on Plant Genetic Resources
for Food and Agriculture**

Item 16.1 of the Provisional Agenda

TENTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, Italy, 20–24 November 2023

**Cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and
Agriculture**

Executive Summary

The Ninth Session of the Governing Body adopted Resolution 11/2022 on cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission). This document, prepared jointly by the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission, provides updates on their cooperation in the period between the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the Governing Body and summarizes the Commission's requests regarding future cooperation.

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to take note of the information contained in this document and provide further guidance, taking into account the elements for a possible Resolution, as provided in the *Annex*.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Governing Body and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) have continued to stress the importance of their close cooperation. This document, prepared jointly by the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission, provides updates on their cooperation in the period between the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the Governing Body. The document includes a synthesis of outcomes of the recently held Nineteenth Regular Session of the Commission that are of direct relevance to cooperation with the International Treaty.
2. The information document *Report from the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Including on FAO Activities Related to the Supporting Components of the International Treaty* provides more detailed information on relevant work of the Commission and the decisions of its Nineteenth Regular Session.¹

II. BACKGROUND AND COOPERATION SINCE THE NINTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

3. The Ninth Session of the Governing Body adopted Resolution 11/2022 on cooperation with the Commission.² Through the Resolution, the Governing Body welcomed the ongoing close cooperation with Commission and the joint activities undertaken by the Secretariats. It agreed to keep the matter of the functional division of tasks and activities between the Governing Body and the Commission under review.
4. The Governing Body invited Contracting Parties that had still not done so 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).
5. The Governing Body welcomed the joint activities of the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission during the past intersessional period and requested its 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:
 - a) the preparation of the Third Report, the review and possible update of the Second GPA, and the revision of the reporting system of the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (WIEWS);
 - b) the organization of symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA);
 - c) the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations;
 - d) the implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the *Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, and work on sustainable use of PGRFA;
 - e) access and benefit-sharing (ABS) and digital sequence information/genetic sequence data (DSI/GSD) on PGRFA;
 - f) 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 Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as to update FAO Members on progress in the implementation of their respective mandates and work programmes, for example through briefings for Permanent Representations; and
 - g) the Global Information System (GLIS) and WIEWS, and relevant targets and indicators.

¹ IT/GB-10/23/16.1/Inf.1.

² www.fao.org/3/nk247en/nk247en.pdf.

6. The Governing Body further encouraged the building of complementarity and collaboration in relation to the development and implementation of national strategies for PGRFA and national planning processes relevant to PGRFA, such as those related to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

7. In the period between the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the Governing Body, the two Secretariats cooperated on multiple issues.

Preparation of *The Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*

8. The Secretariats collaborated in the preparation of a thematic background study on germplasm exchange, which will contribute to the Third Report. The collaboration consisted in the provision of data, advice on their analysis and a review of the narrative section of the analysis. Data from various International Treaty information systems – mainly the MLS Data Store – and from WIEWS were used to analyse the exchange of germplasm, including for crops that are currently not subject to facilitated access under the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-Sharing.

9. The Commission, at its last session, noted that Members and observers may provide inputs to and comments on the draft Third Report in writing by 30 November 2023. The Commission also noted that the draft Third Report should be made available to this Session of the Governing Body. In addition, the draft thematic background studies, once completed, should be made available for review by Members and observers. A revised draft Third Report, reflecting the findings of the thematic background studies and taking into account comments and inputs received from Members, observers and the Governing Body of the International Treaty, would be made available to Members during the first half of 2024 for further comments within a timeframe of 30 days.³ The draft Third Report is contained in the document *Draft Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.⁴

In situ conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture

10. As follow-up to the First International Multi-Stakeholder Symposium on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Technical Consultation on in situ conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA, held in March 2021, the two Secretariats collaborated in the organization of a webinar on the role of the conservation and sustainable use of crop wild relatives and wild food plants, which was held in February 2023.⁵ Participants in the webinar presented and discussed examples of the continuum of management practices for wild PGRFA, from their conservation to their use in breeding improved crop varieties.

Effects of seed policies, laws and regulations

11. Both Secretariats collaborated in the development of a draft concept note on further research on the impact of seed policies, laws and regulations on farmers' ability to access seeds and planting materials of diverse, locally adapted farmers' varieties/landraces,⁶ which was considered by the Commission at its Nineteenth Regular Session.

Implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA

12. Resolution 11/2022 calls for cooperation on the implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA, including on technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the *Genebank Standards for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, and work on sustainable use of PGRFA.

13. The Secretariat of the International Treaty continued promoting the implementation of the Second GPA, including by supporting the sustainable use of PGRFA. In revising the draft *Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for Sustainable Use of PGRFA* for the consideration of the Ad Hoc Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use, the Secretariat of the International Treaty proposed areas of action that respond to policy and institutional needs and priorities identified in global assessments prepared under the guidance of the Commission⁷ and related policy responses, such as the *Framework for*

³ CGRFA-19/23/Report, paragraph 46.

⁴ IT/GB-10/23/16.1/Inf.2.

⁵ www.fao.org/cgrfa/news/news-detail/webinar-wild-plant-genetic-resources-for-food-and-agriculture-their-conservation-and-use/en.

⁶ Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. 2023. *Further research on the impact of seed policies, laws and regulations*. CGRFA-19/23/7.4. *Appendix I*.

⁷ www.fao.org/cgrfa/assessment/en.

Action on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture,⁸ endorsed by the Commission and the FAO Council in 2021.⁹

14. The Commission, at its last session, recommended that the FAO Council request FAO to review and revise, as appropriate the Second GPA, based on the findings of the Third Report and taking into account the gaps, needs and priorities identified through regional consultations, and invite the Governing Body of the International Treaty to participate in the updating process.¹⁰

Access and benefit-sharing and DSI/GSD on PGRFA

15. The two Secretariats, as well as the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), CABI and the CGIAR Genebank Platform, co-organized the *Global Workshop on Digital Sequence Information and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, which was held virtually on 14 and 15 November 2022. The workshop raised awareness among relevant stakeholders in the food and agriculture sector of the role of DSI in the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources and the sharing of benefits derived from their utilization. It addressed the state of use of DSI in the food and agriculture sectors and considered possible implications that related technologies might have for research and development. It also addressed the challenges associated with accessing and making use of DSI. The webcast and presentations are available on the Commission's website.¹¹

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

16. The two Secretariats attended the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 15), which adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The Secretariats, in line with the respective mandates and operational systems, coordinated their efforts to advocate for the consideration of PGRFA in the goals and targets of the GBF as well as in the other relevant COP 15 decisions, including those on DSI and the Monitoring Framework.

III. COMMISSION REQUESTS REGARDING FUTURE COOPERATION

17. At its Nineteenth Regular Session, the Commission welcomed Resolution 11/2022 of the Governing Body and agreed to keep the matter of the functional division of tasks and activities between the Governing Body and the Commission under review.

18. In response to the invitation of the Governing Body, the Commission requested its Secretary to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Secretary of the International Treaty to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies, and in particular with regard to:

- (a) the preparation of the Third Report, including by sharing the draft Third Report with the Governing Body of the International Treaty for inputs and comments;
- (b) the review of the Second GPA, including by enabling the participation of the Governing Body in the updating process, and the revision of the reporting system of WIEWS;
- (c) the organization of symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of PGRFA;
- (d) the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations;
- (e) the implementation and monitoring of the Second GPA, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards and work on sustainable use of PGRFA;
- (f) assembling relevant information for measuring and monitoring monetary and non-monetary benefit-sharing, within their respective mandates and existing frameworks;

⁸ FAO. 2022. *Framework for Action on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8338en>.

⁹ CGRFA-18/21/Report, paragraph 51; CL 168/REP, paragraph 38.

¹⁰ CGRFA-19/23/Report, paragraph 58.

¹¹ www.fao.org/cgrfa/meetings/dsi_workshop_2022/en.

- (g) ABS and DSI/GSD on PGRFA, including through participation by the Secretary of the Commission, as an observer, in meetings of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing;
- (h) 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, as well as to update FAO Members on progress in the implementation of their respective mandates and work programmes, for example through briefings for Permanent Representations;
- (i) GLIS and WIEWS, and relevant targets and indicators; and
- (j) the development and implementation of national strategies for PGRFA, in close collaboration with the International Treaty and its Funding Strategy.

19. The Commission provided more detailed guidance with regard to cooperation in some of these areas, as reflected in the document *Report from the Secretariat of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Including on FAO Activities Related to the Supporting Components of the International Treaty*, and in the draft Resolution contained in the *Annex* to this document.¹²

IV. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

20. The Governing Body is invited to consider this report on cooperation with the Commission in the period between the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the Governing Body, as well as the outcomes of the Nineteenth Regular Session of the Commission, and provide further guidance, taking into account the elements of a possible Resolution on further cooperation, as contained in the *Annex* to this document.

¹² IT/GB-10/23/16.1/Inf.1.

DRAFT RESOLUTION **/2023

**COOPERATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC
RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

THE GOVERNING BODY,

Recalling Resolution 11/2022 and other previous Resolutions on cooperation with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission);

1. **Welcomes** the ongoing cooperation between the Commission and the Governing Body and the joint activities undertaken by the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission in the period between the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the Governing Body;
2. **Agrees** to keep the matter of the functional division of tasks and activities between the Governing Body and the Commission under review and **requests** the Secretary to regularly report any relevant developments in the cooperation with the Commission;
3. **Recalling** Article 17.3 of the International Treaty, **invites** Contracting Parties that have still not done so, 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);
4. **Thanks** the Commission for sharing the draft Third Report with the Governing Body for inputs and comments, and **provides** the following comments and recommendations:

[i. ...]

5. **Welcomes** the joint activities of the Secretariats of the International Treaty and the Commission during the past intersessional period and **requests** 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);
 - iii. the organization of symposia on *in situ* conservation and on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA);
 - iv. the effects of seed policies, laws and regulations, including a scoping study 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 Resources for Food and Agriculture, and work on sustainable use of PGRFA, including to strengthen crop breeding systems and crop improvement capacity;
 - vi. 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;
 - vii. 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, as well as to update FAO

Members on progress in the implementation of their respective mandates and work programmes, for example through briefings for Permanent Representations;

viii. the Global Information System and WIEWS, and relevant targets and indicators; and

ix. the development and implementation of national strategies for PGRFA, in close collaboration with the Funding Strategy of the International Treaty.

6. ***Calls on*** Contracting Parties and other donors, with the capacity to do so, to provide financial resources for collaboration with the Commission in the areas listed in paragraph 5 above.