



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



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

Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda

TENTH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Rome, Italy, 20–24 November 2023

**Report from FAO on its Contribution to the Implementation of the
International Treaty**

Executive Summary

At its Ninth Session, the Governing Body invited FAO to continue providing a report on its contributions to the implementation of the International Treaty, and the Secretary to continue providing updates on collaborations within FAO. This document presents the report for the period between the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the Governing Body.

Guidance Sought

The Governing Body is invited to consider the report and the other information contained in this document, and provide further guidance, taking into account the draft elements for a Resolution contained in the *Annex*.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its Ninth Session, the Governing Body invited FAO to continue providing a comprehensive report on its contributions to the implementation of the International Treaty, and the Secretary to continue providing updates on the status of implementation of invitations made to FAO as well as on ongoing and new collaborations and partnerships within FAO.¹

2. This document responds to the above invitation and describes FAO's contributions and cooperation in accordance with the invitations made by the Governing Body at its Ninth Session. The document also reports on new thematic areas of collaboration and partnerships.

II. FAO's CONTRIBUTIONS, COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Administrative and financial support

3. The Ninth Session of the Governing Body invited FAO to continue its support to the International Treaty in order to enhance its financial sustainability.²

4. The Secretariat of the International Treaty continues to be hosted in the Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment (OCB). This administrative arrangement facilitates further collaboration between the Secretariat of the International Treaty and the teams working on biodiversity mainstreaming, climate change, environment and finance. It also enhances linkages with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, also hosted within the Office.

5. FAO continued providing financial support to the International Treaty towards its financial sustainability. In particular, based on the approved FAO's Programme of Work and Budget for the 2022–2023 biennium, USD 2 million were provisionally allocated to International Treaty, while the total sum of USD 1 939 518 has actually been received in the Core Administrative Budget of the International Treaty.

Membership

6. The Governing Body invited FAO to continue supporting increase in the membership of the International Treaty through concrete measures to promote ratification.³

7. In response, FAO actively supported the membership campaign of the International Treaty through the Legal Office and the regional FAO offices, by organizing meetings, providing information and facilitating contacts with the national authorities, including in China, Colombia, South Africa, and for countries in the South West Pacific and the Caribbean.

Strategies

8. The Governing Body invited FAO to integrate the International Treaty activities into the implementation of relevant initiatives and strategies, such as those on digital food and agriculture, the mainstreaming of biodiversity, science and innovation, climate change, in order to contribute to addressing complex social, economic and environmental challenges of agrifood systems in a globally equitable, inclusive and sustainable manner.⁴

9. The FAO Council, at its 163rd Session, adopted the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors (Strategy).⁵ At its 166th Session, the Council approved the 2021–23 Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors (Action Plan).⁶ According to the Action Plan, the Council will be invited to consider the draft 2024–27 Action Plan at the end of 2023.

¹ Resolution 9/2022, paragraph 7; available at: www.fao.org/3/nk244en/nk244en.pdf.

² Paragraph 1.

³ Paragraph 2.

⁴ Paragraph 3.

⁵ FAO. 2020. FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors. Rome. doi.org/10.4060/ca7722en.

⁶ FAO. 2021. 2021-23 Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors. Rome. doi.org/10.4060/cb5515en.

10. FAO addressed several key issues of relevance to the International Treaty in the Action Plan, including actions related to: benefit-sharing, sustainable use of biodiversity, legal and policy support to FAO Member Countries, involvement in UN partnerships related to biodiversity. Furthermore, the Secretariat plays an active role in the recently established FAO Interdepartmental Working Group on Biodiversity. Through the implementation of the Strategy, the collaboration has been strengthened, especially within OCB, in particular in the areas of communication and outreach, monitoring of developments in other relevant fora, knowledge management and development of partnerships. Internal collaboration has been strengthened to enable contributions by the Organization to the development and implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

11. In the review and updating of the Action Plan, FAO will take into consideration new developments and agreements, including those reached under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty. The further implementation and updating of the Action Plan offer an opportunity to build synergies with other relevant strategies such as FAO's new Strategy on Climate Change 2022–2031, the Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition and FAO's Science and Innovation Strategy.^{7,8,9}

Further integration of the International Treaty into programmes and activities

12. The Secretariat collaborated with FAO's Chief Scientist Office on the issue paper, "Gene Editing and Agrifood Systems".¹⁰ The paper discusses the most pertinent aspects of gene editing, including the consequences for human hunger, human health, food safety, effects on the environment, animal welfare, socio-economic impact and distribution of benefits. The paper also addresses ethical concerns and issues of governance and regulation, including access and benefit-sharing, and summarizes the roles of the public and private sectors. Various scenarios are also presented for how gene editing might be used in the future to help transform agrifood systems.

13. FAO has fully engaged the International Treaty Secretariat in the context of the International Year of Millets (IYM), especially in the provision of technical information, outreach and development of communication materials. The Secretariat, together with the Global Crop Diversity Trust and ICRISAT, organized an online event titled "Unlocking the Power of Diversity: the role of sorghum and millets genetic resources in sustainable agriculture". The event brought together leading international experts to provide a global overview of the status of the production of sorghum and millets, and of the conservation and use of their diversity by international genebanks, national programs, researchers and breeders, the seed sector and non-governmental organizations.¹¹ The Secretariat is also engaging in other events in the second half of the year in collaboration with ICRISAT and the African Union, and is preparing two booklets on crop descriptors to facilitate the documentation of foxtail millets and fonio.

Communications and outreach

14. The Secretariat continued strengthening its cooperation with FAO's Office of Communications (OCC) on the development of communication and outreach products and materials. During the 2022 World Food Day celebrations, a researcher and project coordinator from a project of the Benefit-Sharing Fund (BSF) in Serbia was featured as a FAO "Food Hero".¹² The Secretariat and OCC have consolidated their collaboration during the IYM. Stories related to BSF projects in India and Zimbabwe, were featured in the IYM celebrations.¹³

15. FAO's Digitalization and Informatics Division (CSI) of FAO has supported the further development and migration of the Global Information System Portal to a new server, supported enhancements to increase its security and stability, its design and responsiveness, and provided a new sub-domain to make it more visible and findable.

⁷ www.fao.org/economic/nutrition/en/.

⁸ www.fao.org/science-technology-and-innovation/about/en.

⁹ www.fao.org/climate-change/action-areas/fao-strategic-framework/en.

¹⁰ www.fao.org/3/cc3579en/cc3579en.pdf.

¹¹ www.fao.org/3/cc6151en/cc6151en.pdf.

¹² www.youtube.com/watch?v=afSnSEcABVgy.

¹³ www.fao.org/fao-stories/article/en/c/1635790/; www.fao.org/millets-2023/my-story/detail/patrick-mutepeva/en;
www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4ZeEo0680k.

Support to International Treaty implementation

16. The Governing Body emphasized the importance of FAO's continuous assistance with the implementation of the International Treaty at the national level, including through the provision of technical, capacity-building and operational support to the International Treaty and its mechanisms, such as the BSF.¹⁴

17. FAO, through various units and decentralized offices, provided technical inputs and support to implementation of the twenty projects approved for funding in the Fourth Call for Proposals of the BSF. During the intersessional period, the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture consistently and regularly supported the Secretariat with the review and technical clearance of various items needed for research and development within the BSF projects (e.g., materials and equipment for breeding, evaluation and characterisation, genotyping and phenotyping). FAO's regional and country offices supported project operations, including the procurement of agricultural inputs, research and high-tech equipment.

18. The FAO Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa, in coordination with the Secretariat, supported a field mission to selected project sites in Zimbabwe for representatives of the Italian Government, the Deputy Minister for Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development of Zimbabwe and BSF project coordinators and stakeholders.¹⁵

19. FAO's Procurement and Letters of Agreement Unit supported the preparation and monitoring of the Letters of Agreement for the twenty projects of the fourth BSF cycle. The support will continue with the preparation of the contracts for the newly approved twenty-eight projects of the fifth cycle.

20. FAO's Resource Mobilization and Private Sector Partnerships Division (PSR) supported the management, reporting and monitoring of relevant funding agreements supporting the implementation of International Treaty and its BSF. Collaboration with PSR extended to a possible funding partnership with the Global Crop Diversity Trust under the project Biodiversity for Opportunities, Livelihood and Development (BOLD). Under the partnership, the Secretariat will deliver policy and budget and programme training for the effective management of national genebanks.

21. FAO collaborated with the Secretariat and international stakeholders on the implementation of a USD 1.9 million project in Ukraine funded by the European Union to enable the safeguarding and re-establishing of Ukraine's PGRFA system. Further information on the Ukraine initiative is available in document, IT/GB-10/23/9.1.3, *Report on the Emergency Reserve for Germplasm Collections at Risk*.

22. FAO's Global Environment Facility (GEF) Unit, which is also under OCB, continues to work closely with the Secretariat and the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization (Funding Committee). In this context, the GEF Unit provided an update to the Funding Committee on FAO's ongoing work and latest developments under the GEF Programs, in particular the Eighth Replenishment (GEF-8). Developments of relevance to the International Treaty within GEF-8 were highlighted, including: the rolling out of the FAO-led New Food System Integrated Program; the renewed Small Grants Program, which prioritizes sustainable agriculture actions at community level and has the potential to build synergies with the BSF; and the establishment of a Global Biodiversity Framework Fund.

23. The Funding Committee encouraged the continued collaboration between FAO's GEF Unit and the Secretariat and encouraged FAO to engage with national partners in the development of projects for the mutually supportive implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and the International Treaty, as called for in the GEF-8 programming directions.

24. The responsible FAO unit collaborated with the Secretariat on the implementation of a FAO-led GEF-7 Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes (DSL-IP), leveraging the International Treaty's experience in implementing projects under the BSF and connecting with the BSF's network of partners. The overall program comprises of USD 104 million under GEF-7, along with over USD 800 million in co-financing. It integrates a work-stream on Community Seed Banks in five countries in Southern Africa, which includes actions to support International Treaty implementation and the provision of a regional knowledge hub based on experience gained through the BSF. A representative from

¹⁴ Resolution 9/2022, paragraph 5.

¹⁵ www.fao.org/plant-treaty/news/news-detail/en/c/1635442/

the Secretariat is a member of FAO's Global and Regional Coordination Technical Project Task Force for the program.

25. The Secretariat collaborated with FAO's technical units and the country office on the project "Dynamic Conservation and Sustainable Use of Agro-Biodiversity in Traditional Agro-Ecosystems of The Philippines". The Secretariat contributed to assisting the government with providing legal recognition, tools and approaches for the realization of Farmers' Rights and the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity. The tools and approaches include the promotion of participatory plant breeding, the establishment and governance of community seed banks by and for the farming communities and indigenous peoples.

26. The Secretariat also collaborated on the dialogue to be held between FAO and civil society organizations for an enhanced understanding of Farmers' Rights and the interface with human rights.¹⁶

27. The Governing Body invited FAO to continue its active support to the activities of the International Treaty for the fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 15, and to build awareness of the importance of the implementation of, and compliance with, the International Treaty at the highest national levels.¹⁷

28. For the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF), FAO continues submitting a consolidated corporate response which contains contributions of technical committees and intergovernmental bodies, including the Governing Body of the International Treaty. Requested inputs are policy actions and recommendations made by those technical and policy bodies to advance the implementation of SDGs. The theme for 2023 is "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels". Inputs from the International Treaty have been transmitted to the HLPF Secretariat.¹⁸

III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

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

¹⁶ A hybrid event on "Implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas (UNDROP): a path to overcome food crisis", Session 5: Right to Seeds, panel discussion on Right to seeds. Organized by FAO on 25-26 September 2023.

¹⁷ Paragraph 4.

¹⁸ [International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture | High-Level Political Forum 2023 \(un.org\).](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/dest/2023/09/2023-hlpf-2023-09-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100-101-102-103-104-105-106-107-108-109-110-111-112-113-114-115-116-117-118-119-120-121-122-123-124-125-126-127-128-129-130-131-132-133-134-135-136-137-138-139-140-141-142-143-144-145-146-147-148-149-150-151-152-153-154-155-156-157-158-159-160-161-162-163-164-165-166-167-168-169-170-171-172-173-174-175-176-177-178-179-180-181-182-183-184-185-186-187-188-189-190-191-192-193-194-195-196-197-198-199-200-201-202-203-204-205-206-207-208-209-210-211-212-213-214-215-216-217-218-219-220-221-222-223-224-225-226-227-228-229-230-231-232-233-234-235-236-237-238-239-240-241-242-243-244-245-246-247-248-249-250-251-252-253-254-255-256-257-258-259-260-261-262-263-264-265-266-267-268-269-270-271-272-273-274-275-276-277-278-279-280-281-282-283-284-285-286-287-288-289-290-291-292-293-294-295-296-297-298-299-300-301-302-303-304-305-306-307-308-309-310-311-312-313-314-315-316-317-318-319-320-321-322-323-324-325-326-327-328-329-330-331-332-333-334-335-336-337-338-339-340-341-342-343-344-345-346-347-348-349-350-351-352-353-354-355-356-357-358-359-360-361-362-363-364-365-366-367-368-369-370-371-372-373-374-375-376-377-378-379-380-381-382-383-384-385-386-387-388-389-390-391-392-393-394-395-396-397-398-399-400-401-402-403-404-405-406-407-408-409-410-411-412-413-414-415-416-417-418-419-420-421-422-423-424-425-426-427-428-429-430-431-432-433-434-435-436-437-438-439-440-441-442-443-444-445-446-447-448-449-450-451-452-453-454-455-456-457-458-459-460-461-462-463-464-465-466-467-468-469-470-471-472-473-474-475-476-477-478-479-480-481-482-483-484-485-486-487-488-489-490-491-492-493-494-495-496-497-498-499-500-501-502-503-504-505-506-507-508-509-510-511-512-513-514-515-516-517-518-519-520-521-522-523-524-525-526-527-528-529-530-531-532-533-534-535-536-537-538-539-540-541-542-543-544-545-546-547-548-549-550-551-552-553-554-555-556-557-558-559-560-561-562-563-564-565-566-567-568-569-570-571-572-573-574-575-576-577-578-579-580-581-582-583-584-585-586-587-588-589-590-591-592-593-594-595-596-597-598-599-600-601-602-603-604-605-606-607-608-609-610-611-612-613-614-615-616-617-618-619-620-621-622-623-624-625-626-627-628-629-630-631-632-633-634-635-636-637-638-639-640-641-642-643-644-645-646-647-648-649-650-651-652-653-654-655-656-657-658-659-660-661-662-663-664-665-666-667-668-669-670-671-672-673-674-675-676-677-678-679-680-681-682-683-684-685-686-687-688-689-690-691-692-693-694-695-696-697-698-699-700-701-702-703-704-705-706-707-708-709-710-711-712-713-714-715-716-717-718-719-720-721-722-723-724-725-726-727-728-729-730-731-732-733-734-735-736-737-738-739-740-741-742-743-744-745-746-747-748-749-750-751-752-753-754-755-756-757-758-759-760-761-762-763-764-765-766-767-768-769-770-771-772-773-774-775-776-777-778-779-780-781-782-783-784-785-786-787-788-789-790-791-792-793-794-795-796-797-798-799-800-801-802-803-804-805-806-807-808-809-810-811-812-813-814-815-816-817-818-819-820-821-822-823-824-825-826-827-828-829-830-831-832-833-834-835-836-837-838-839-840-841-842-843-844-845-846-847-848-849-850-851-852-853-854-855-856-857-858-859-860-861-862-863-864-865-866-867-868-869-870-871-872-873-874-875-876-877-878-879-880-881-882-883-884-885-886-887-888-889-890-891-892-893-894-895-896-897-898-899-900-901-902-903-904-905-906-907-908-909-910-911-912-913-914-915-916-917-918-919-920-921-922-923-924-925-926-927-928-929-930-931-932-933-934-935-936-937-938-939-940-941-942-943-944-945-946-947-948-949-950-951-952-953-954-955-956-957-958-959-960-961-962-963-964-965-966-967-968-969-970-971-972-973-974-975-976-977-978-979-980-981-982-983-984-985-986-987-988-989-990-991-992-993-994-995-996-997-998-999-1000)

DRAFT ELEMENTS FOR RESOLUTION **/2023

**CONTRIBUTION OF FAO TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL TREATY**

THE GOVERNING BODY,

Recalling Resolution 9/2022 and other previous Resolutions on the Contribution of FAO to the implementation of the International Treaty;

1. **Thanks** FAO for the financial and administrative support it provides to the Secretariat of the International Treaty and to the implementation of the International Treaty, and **invites** FAO to continue its support to the International Treaty;
2. **Emphasizes** the importance of FAO's continued assistance with the implementation of the International Treaty at the national level, including through the provision of technical, capacity building and operational support where appropriate to the International Treaty and its mechanisms, such as the Benefit-Sharing Fund;
3. **Invites** FAO to continue supporting the efforts to increase the membership of the International Treaty by undertaking concrete measures to promote ratification by FAO Member Countries that have not yet done so, with a view to making it a universal agreement;
4. **Further invites** FAO to continue its active support to the International Treaty as a key international instrument for the fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 15 and the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including by raising awareness of the importance of the implementation of, and compliance with, the International Treaty at the highest national levels through the FAO country, sub-regional and regional offices;
5. **Welcomes** progress made in the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and its 2021-23 Action Plan, and **notes** 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;
6. **Invites** FAO to take into consideration new developments within the International Treaty in the review and updating of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors by the FAO Council and to integrate the relevant components of the International Treaty into the implementation of initiatives and strategies, with a view to providing additional channels for the International Treaty to contribute to addressing complex social, economic and environmental challenges of agrifood systems in a globally equitable, inclusive and sustainable manner;
7. **Encourages** FAO to support Member Countries, upon request, to integrate biodiversity for food and agriculture in the updating and revision of National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans, and in doing so to emphasize opportunities for strengthening implementation of the International Treaty, and **calls upon** donors to support FAO in this important work and to jointly mobilize resources with the International Treaty;
8. **Takes 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.
9. **Requests** the Secretary to continue pursuing collaboration with units and instruments within FAO, including on outreach, resource mobilization and private sector engagement;
10. **Invites** FAO to continue providing a comprehensive report at each Session on its contributions to the implementation of the International Treaty and **requests** the Secretary to continue providing updates on the

status of implementation of the above invitations extended by the Governing Body of the International Treaty to FAO, as well as on ongoing and new collaborations and partnerships within FAO.