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# COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

## Item 14 of the Provisional Agenda

### Eighteenth Regular Session

27 September – 1 October 2021

## COMMISSION LINKAGES WITH THE FAO STRATEGY ON MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY ACROSS AGRICULTURAL SECTORS AND THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. On many occasions, Members of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), have stressed the importance for the Commission to cooperate with other international bodies, instruments and organizations. At its last session, the Commission specifically requested the Secretariat to continue strengthening collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in particular in the context of the preparation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.<sup>1</sup> In considering the follow-up to the report on *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*,<sup>2</sup> the Commission also agreed that it should be complementary to, not duplicative of, and coherent with, other processes and initiatives in FAO, such as the *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors* (FAO Strategy).<sup>3</sup>

2. This document gives a brief overview of various biodiversity-related events of other bodies, instruments and organizations, held or originally scheduled to take place in 2020/21. The document summarizes the FAO Strategy and the Action Plan for its implementation.<sup>4</sup> It further reports on the state of preparations of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and identifies linkages between the Commission's work, the FAO Strategy and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, for information of and consideration by the Commission.

## II. BACKGROUND

3. Since the last session of the Commission, biodiversity, including biodiversity for food and agriculture (BFA), experienced unprecedented levels of attention from governments and the general public. The increased level of attention coincided with the growing recognition, at the end of the UN Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020, that progress towards global biodiversity targets including those of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had been insufficient.<sup>5</sup>

4. Due to a series of key biodiversity-related meetings scheduled for 2020, the year had been coined the "super year of biodiversity". Many global meetings were to contribute to raising ambitions and commitments on biodiversity in 2020, including the meetings of the Conferences of Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and CBD, the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly, the UN Ocean Conference, the World Forestry Congress and the World Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

5. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many meetings had to be postponed. Nevertheless, the UN Summit on Biodiversity was convened virtually on 30 September 2020 under the theme "Urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development". Over 100 world leaders attended the virtual event to build political momentum for the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the CBD in Kunming, China. The Director-General of FAO, speaking at the Summit on behalf of several sister UN entities, joined the call for urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development.<sup>6</sup>

6. In 2021, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration was launched, and the Pre-Summit of the UN Food Systems Summit<sup>7</sup> took place on 26–28 July. The UN Food Systems Summit will take place

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<sup>1</sup> CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 105.

<sup>2</sup> FAO. 2019. *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, J. Bélanger & D. Pilling (eds.). FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture Assessments. Rome. 572 pp. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3129EN/CA3129EN.pdf>).

<sup>3</sup> CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 44.

<sup>4</sup> FAO. 2020. *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca7722en/CA7722EN.pdf>); FAO. 2021. *2021-23 Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors*. Rome. (also available at <http://www.fao.org/3/cb5515en/cb5515en.pdf>).

<sup>5</sup> FAO is the UN custodian agency for many biodiversity related SDGs, and a contributing agency to others; SDG 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 6.4.1, 6.4.2, 12.3.1, 14.4.1, 14.6.1, 14.7.1, 14.b.1, 14.c.1, 15.1.1, 15.2.1, 15.3.1, 15.4.2, 15.6.1., see <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/indicators/en/>

<sup>6</sup> Details in CL 164/INF/4-WA3; CL 165/INF/4-WA4

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/pre-summit>

on 23 September 2021. In January 2021, the Government of France, in cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank, convened the One Planet Summit for Biodiversity.<sup>8</sup> Four themes were discussed, in particular: (i) the protection of marine and terrestrial areas; (ii) the promotion of agroecology; (iii) the financing of biodiversity; and (iv) the protection of tropical forests, species and human health. The Director-General of FAO, in a virtual address, highlighted FAO's commitment to continue supporting the mainstreaming of biodiversity across agriculture and food sectors.

7. The 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES-8) was held from 14 to 24 June 2021. As the result of several hours of deliberations in working groups, where most contentious items were solved, the main outcomes of IPBES-8 include:

- the approval of the scoping report of a thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health (nexus assessment);
- the approval of the scoping report of a thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, determinants of transformative change, and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity (transformative change assessment); and,
- the approval of the interim workplans of the five IPBES task forces for the intersessional period 2021–2022.

8. Biodiversity-related activities and events at global level were paralleled by promising activities at regional and national level. As part of its Green Deal, the European Union (EU), for example, announced bold steps for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In October 2020, the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council agreed on conclusions regarding the EU Farm to Fork Strategy<sup>9</sup> and called on the European Commission “to take concrete actions for ensuring the protection, restoration and sustainable use of plant and animal genetic resources” and invited it to “present a EU strategy for genetic resources for aquaculture, forests and agriculture that is based on the work of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the FAO.” The EU Environment Council agreed on conclusions regarding the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030<sup>10</sup> and recalled “the commitments and efforts made within the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation to implement the principles of conservation and sustainable development, particularly in relation to animal, aquatic, plant and forest genetic resources, as well as emerging thematic areas including microorganisms, invertebrates, nutrition and health” and asserted “the importance of close and constant cooperation with this forum with the aim of achieving common goals, utilising resources efficiently and avoiding duplication.”

### **III. FAO STRATEGY ON MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY ACROSS AGRICULTURAL SECTORS AND THE ACTION PLAN FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

9. The Council, at its 163rd Session in December 2019, adopted the FAO Strategy.<sup>11</sup> The FAO Strategy applies to FAO's work on crop and livestock production, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture (“agricultural sectors”) that are sustained by, or may have impact on, biodiversity, ecosystem and other services biodiversity provides. It aims to enhance the capacities of Members to develop and implement evidence-based policies, programmes and activities for biodiversity mainstreaming across the agricultural sectors and to monitor and evaluate their impact. Strengthened coordination and delivery of FAO's work relevant to biodiversity, including through enhanced technical capacity of and better coordination between FAO departments, regional and country offices, is another outcome of the Strategy. The FAO Strategy also aims to integrate a biodiversity perspective into FAO policies, programmes and activities, and suggests that biodiversity is regularly considered by relevant Governing and Statutory Bodies of FAO.

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<sup>8</sup> One Planet Summit - Commitments to act in favor of biodiversity (12 January 2021) ; see also CL 166/INF/4.

<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en)

<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en)

<sup>11</sup> CL 163/REP, paragraph 10 g; CL 163/11 Rev.1., also available at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca7722en/>

10. The FAO Strategy requires FAO to develop an action plan, including a timetable, to operationalize the FAO Strategy. In the course of 2020, the Committee on Agriculture, the Committee on Forestry and the Committee on Fisheries, in collaboration with the Programme Committee, contributed to and commented on a draft Action Plan.<sup>12</sup>

11. At the request of the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Forestry, the Commission's Group of National Focal Points for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (Group of National Focal Points) was in addition requested to provide comments on and inputs to the draft Action Plan.<sup>13</sup> The Group of National Focal Points noted the important role of the FAO Strategy and its Action Plan in guiding and facilitating FAO's support to Members in mainstreaming biodiversity across their agricultural sectors and conserving and sustainably using BFA. It recommended that in the future the Commission itself should be fully involved in the implementation, review and updating of the FAO Strategy and its Action Plan. It also recommended that a report on the implementation of the FAO Strategy and its Action Plan be made available to the Commission at each session.

12. The Group of National Focal Points stressed that FAO, through established instruments and bodies, including the Commission and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Treaty), already provides a global framework for the conservation and sustainable use of BFA, including genetic resources, which should be brought to bear for FAO's work on biodiversity. It recommended that, upon review of the FAO Strategy, the Commission and the Governing Body of the Treaty be explicitly mentioned in the section on "effective governance".

13. The Group of National Focal Points recommended that biodiversity be integrated into FAO policies, programmes and activities and regularly be considered by relevant Governing and Statutory Bodies of FAO. It stressed the important role of collaboration and partnerships for the implementation of the FAO Strategy and its Action Plan and requested FAO and its Governing and Statutory Bodies to closely collaborate in this regard with relevant international organizations and instruments and national, regional and international research institutes, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector.

14. The Group of National Focal Points stressed the importance of complementarity of the FAO Strategy, the Action Plan and Post-2020 Global Biodiversity framework and emphasized the need to closely coordinate monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the different instruments. The Group noted with appreciation that the Commission's policy response to the report on *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, the FAO Strategy and its Action Plan will strengthen FAO's role in the implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

15. The Council, at its 166<sup>th</sup> Session, approved the 2021–23 Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy.<sup>14</sup>

#### IV. THE STATUS OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

16. The COP15 to the CBD is expected to adopt the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and places the global community on a path towards realizing the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, "Living in harmony with nature".

17. Consultations on the Global Biodiversity Framework are ongoing. In response to the Commission's requests,<sup>15</sup> the Secretary submitted an update of the Commission's work to the CBD and contributed to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.<sup>16</sup> FAO hosted the second Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in February 2020. FAO

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<sup>12</sup> COAG/2020/16; COFO/2020/5 Rev.2; COFI/2020/9.1; PC 130/7 Rev.1.

<sup>13</sup> CGRFA-18/21/7.1.1.; see also PC 130/7 Inf.Note1.

<sup>14</sup> CL 166/REP, paragraph 24 h; PC 130/7 Rev.1; also available at <http://www.fao.org/publications/card/fr/c/CB5515EN>

<sup>15</sup> CGRFA-17/19/Report, paragraph 39, 40, 44, 99, 105.

<sup>16</sup> Submission Nr 28 to Notification 2019-075 Invitation to provide proposals on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020/submissions/2019-075>

continues to support the process of developing a robust Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and provided inputs to a number of global, regional, sectoral and thematic consultations, including the 24th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the 3rd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, and participated in the 3rd meeting of the OEWG in August 2021. The first draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework was posted in July 2021.<sup>17</sup>

18. Furthermore, in July 2021, FAO and the Secretariat of the CBD organized the Global Dialogue on the role of food and agriculture in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework,<sup>18</sup> outputs of which will feed into discussions on the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework<sup>19</sup> and the COP15.

## V. COMMISSION LINKAGES WITH THE FAO STRATEGY AND THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

19. While the FAO Strategy with the Action Plan for its implementation and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework address different audiences and have distinctly different functions, they will both, hopefully, improve the conditions for the Commission and its Members to progress in the sustainable use and conservation of BFA, including genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA).

20. The Strategy and the Action Plan are addressed to FAO units and their implementation is the shared responsibility of FAO offices, divisions, country and regional offices. They strengthen coordination and collaboration within FAO while avoiding duplication of work. By integrating biodiversity across FAO's policies, programmes and activities, and coordinating relevant activities, they will ensure that FAO's support to countries takes biodiversity-related considerations, including the Commission's Global Plans of Action, into account.

21. The Global Plans of Action negotiated under the aegis of the Commission are important internationally agreed frameworks for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and GRFA. Through these instruments, FAO Members commit themselves to make every possible effort to take action on the conservation and sustainable use of BFA and GRFA, in accordance with their capacities and national conditions. The responsibility for their implementation, therefore, lies primarily with FAO Members.

22. The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will provide a framework within which the Commission's Global Plans of Action and other policies, as well as FAO's activities relevant to biodiversity, will act as important cornerstones. It will be crucial for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to recognize that reducing the ecological footprint of agriculture, conserving and sustainably using biodiversity for food and agriculture and, thus, transforming agriculture, forestry and fisheries, requires active support of countries, in particular developing countries and of relevant stakeholders, such as farmers, livestock keepers, foresters and fisherfolk.

## VI. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

23. The Commission is invited to:
- i. welcome the collaboration of FAO and the Commission Secretariat with the CBD;
  - ii. take note of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and the Action Plan for its implementation;
  - iii. take note of the status of preparations for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework; and

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/article/draft-1-global-biodiversity-framework>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.fao.org/biodiversity/global-dialogue-biodiversity-food-agriculture/en/>

<sup>19</sup> *Joint Report of the Co-Chairs of the Global Dialogue on the Role of Food and Agriculture in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*, available under "Other documents"  
<https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020/wg2020-03/documents>

- iv. review and revise, as appropriate, the draft Resolution contained in the *Appendix* to this document, and invite the Director-General to bring the Resolution to the attention of the Council for the latter's approval.

## APPENDIX

### THE SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE AND THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK DRAFT RESOLUTION

#### THE COUNCIL

**Having considered** the report of the Eighteenth Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission);

**Stressing** the important linkages between biodiversity for food and agriculture and relevant global instruments and frameworks, especially the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework currently under development under the Convention on Biological Diversity;

**Recalling** the Commission's commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture, including animal, aquatic, plant and forest genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from these resources;

**Recognizing** that the Commission provides a global framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture, including genetic resources;

**Further recognizing** the importance of the Commission's Global Plans of Action as frameworks for national action to enhance the management of, animal, aquatic, plant and forest genetic resources and biodiversity for food and agriculture at national, regional and global levels;

**Noting** that the Commission's policy response to the report on *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, the *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors* and the Action Plan for its implementation provide important contributions to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and its implementation;

**Acknowledging** the important work of the Commission in the development of targets and indicators on genetic resources for food and agriculture in the context of the implementation of the Commission's Global Plans of Action, and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

**Stressing** the importance of complementarity of the Commission's Global Plans of Action, the FAO Strategy and its Action Plan and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and the need to closely coordinate monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the different instruments:

1. expresses its willingness to cooperate with the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;
2. reiterates the need for FAO and the Commission to contribute within their mandate to the development and implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework currently being developed under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
3. invites the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to:
  - i. take into account the special nature of biodiversity for food and agriculture, in particular genetic resources for food and agriculture, their distinctive features, and problems needing distinctive solutions;
  - ii. recognize the importance of sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture as a contribution to its conservation;
  - iii. actively support, as appropriate, the transformation of agri- food systems to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture and to leave

no farmer, livestock keeper and pastoralist, forest-based producer, fisherfolk and aquaculturalist behind;

4. expresses its willingness to closely collaborate, in the implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, with relevant international organizations and instruments and national, regional and international research institutes, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples and the private sector;
5. invites the private sector to support the implementation of the Commission's Global Plans of Action, and to encourage donors to provide support to their implementation as part of the global effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Target 2.5 on genetic diversity;
6. calls for support of FAO's capacity-development efforts with regard to the conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture in developing countries, including through South-South and triangular cooperation; and
7. invites Members to:
  - i. mainstream biodiversity for food and agriculture into policies, programmes and national and regional plans of action on agriculture, climate change, food security, nutrition and health, and other relevant sectors; and
  - ii. consider developing funding proposals on biodiversity for food and agriculture, consistent with their national priorities, as appropriate, when seeking funding from various sources, including the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility and other funding mechanisms and modalities.