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Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

Item 4.3 of the Draft Provisional Agenda

COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Ninth Regular Session

Rome, 9 and 14 – 18 October 2002

A FACILITATING MECHANISM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE*

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**A FACILITATING MECHANISM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION
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RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The Fourth FAO International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources (Leipzig, Germany, 1996) with the participation of 150 countries, adopted the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. The process requested and coordinated by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, was carried out with the active involvement of governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, researchers, and farmers' groups. Countries present at the Leipzig Conference committed themselves to taking the necessary steps to implement the *Plan* in accordance with their national capacities.¹

2. The Conference agreed that the *Plan* "provides a coherent framework for activities in the field of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, in sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources, as well as in institution- and capacity-building."² It further added that the *Plan* "will contribute to creating synergies among on-going activities, as well as more efficient use of available resources." As such, the *Plan* can be regarded as the main framework for activities at national, regional and international levels, and provides a strategy to guide regional and international cooperation on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in the coming years.³ The Conference also agreed that "overall progress in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and of the related follow-up processes would be monitored and guided by the national governments and other members of FAO through the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture."⁴

3. The Leipzig Conference emphasized that "The follow-up processes calls for action at local, national and international levels and should involve all parties which were associated with the preparation of the International Technical Conference: the national governments, local and regional authorities, regional and international organizations, both inter-governmental and non-governmental, the scientific community, the private sector, local communities and farmers and other agricultural producers and their associations."⁵

The need for renewed concerted action

4. The Commission at its Eighth Regular Session discussed an overview report on the implementation of the *Plan* since its adoption, and noted that, "while there had been significant progress, much remains to be done at local, national and international levels."⁶ The Intergovernmental Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources at their first Session, in 2001,

¹ *Leipzig Declaration*, 23 June 1996.

² *Leipzig Declaration*, 23 June 1996.

³ *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources*, para. 8.

⁴ ITCPGR/96/REP para 21.

⁵ ITCPGR/REP para 19.

⁶ CGRFA-8/99/Rep, para 15.

reviewed a progress report on the implementation of the *Plan* since 1998. The report stressed that while a significant number of activities had been undertaken to implement many priority areas of the *Plan*, additional work is required at all levels to further implement priority areas with an emphasis on those grouped under *In situ* Conservation and Development, and institutions and human capacity-building. The progress report further stated that despite substantial efforts by international organizations (including FAO, CGIAR centres, UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank), national funding agencies, NGOs and the private sector in supporting implementation of the *Plan*, more than 70 per cent of the activities reported by countries in the 1998-2000 biennium were implemented using solely national resources. Document CGRFA-9/02/6, *Progress Report on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action*, presents a revised version of the document taking into account the deliberations of the Working Group.

5. In May 2000, participants at the Global Forum on Agricultural Research Conference⁷ held in Dresden, Germany, unanimously endorsed the Global Plan of Action as the basic and comprehensive framework for undertaking those technical activities essential for the effective conservation, development and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Participants were pleased to note that many countries and organizations were already implementing parts of the *Plan*. However, they expressed concern that coordinated implementation and associated financing of the *Plan* had not been realized, and urged effective implementation of the *Plan* through the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, together with agreed and adequate financial provisions.⁸

6. A programme of work on agriculture biodiversity was adopted by Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at their 5th Conference in 2000. The programme of work notes the importance of building on existing international plans of action, and in this regard specifically recognizes the Global Plan of Action. Continued implementation of the Global Plan of Action should consider relevant activities under the Convention's programme of work to determine appropriate roles and responsibilities, and promote complementary action among diverse interests thereby avoiding duplication of effort, and ensuring that the more urgent priorities are addressed while reflecting the distinctive nature of agricultural biodiversity.

7. Since the time of the preparation of the Global Plan of Action, and the first Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (1994-6), considerable experience has been gained in many areas critical for the implementation of the Plan. This includes work concerning on farm management of plant genetic resources, participatory plant breeding, and furthering the understanding of local seed systems. National plant genetic resources programmes have been put in place in many countries and established networks in most sub-regions provide appropriate platforms for stakeholder involvement and the necessary integration of conservation with the sustainable use of plant genetic resources in the plant breeding and seed sector development. The combined effort has resulted in a body of knowledge and experience that could provide the basis for a major advance in management of plant genetic resources. However, the wish of many stakeholders that the *Plan* provide for coherent action in the fields of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources, and institution and capacity-building has not been fully realized. Among the reasons for this is the absence, as yet, of an effective international arrangement to facilitate the implementation of the *Plan*. A

⁷ The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) represents a broad constituency, including national agricultural systems, regional and sub-regional organizations, universities, advanced research institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, farmers' organizations, multilateral and donor agencies, and international agricultural research centres.

⁸ Dresden Declaration on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture endorsed at the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) Meeting in Dresden, Germany, May 2000.

coordinated and strategic approach must be employed building on the knowledge and experience base in order to significantly advance the implementation of the Global Plan of Action at national, regional and international levels, and fully realize the potential contribution of individuals and organizations with interest in the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, including seeds.

8. In responding to the Commission's request, the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources discussed different options to facilitate further implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The document CGRFA/WG-PGR/1/01/5, which was developed following consultations with both IPGRI and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), considered a number of approaches to facilitating implementation of the Global Plan of Action: the Regular Programme Approach; the Project Model Approach; the Consultative Forum Approach; and the Facility Approach.⁹ Recalling the statements of the Leipzig Conference, and recommendations of the Commission, the Working Group highlighted the importance of the implementation of the Global Plan of Action by all stakeholders and recognized the need for a dynamic and flexible approach to promote implementation of activities as determined by countries' own priorities. Members expressed diverse views about the four options. The Working Group requested that the Secretariat elaborate further all of the options for consideration by the Commission at its Ninth Regular Session.

9. With the adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture by FAO Conference (Rome, November 2001), the *Global Plan of Action* assumes still greater significance. The important role of the *Global Plan of Action* is acknowledged by Article 14 of the Treaty: "*Recognized that the rolling Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is important to the Treaty, Contracting Parties should promote its effective implementation, including through national actions and, as appropriate, international cooperation to provide a coherent framework, inter alia, for capacity building, technology transfer and exchange of information, taking into account the provisions of Article 13.*" The Treaty acknowledges that the ability to fully implement the *Global Plan of Action*, in particular by developing countries and countries with economies in transition, will depend largely upon the effective implementation of the benefit sharing arrangements of the Multilateral System and of the funding strategy (article 13.5).

10. A renewed investment in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action would be extremely timely given recent and significant international agreements including, the World Food Summit: five years later; adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and establishment of the programme of work on agriculture biodiversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Now is the time for a renewed, concerted and well-planned effort to fully implement the Global Plan of Action as a major contribution to these agreements, and to the overall goals of the international community to achieve global food security and enhance rural development. Members of the Commission have indicated that additional efforts are required to effectively implement the Global Plan of Action. Stakeholders, who have stressed the need for coordinated action and improved financing, have reaffirmed this need.

11. This document attempts to provide the rationale for establishing a Facilitating Mechanism¹⁰ that would function to develop a more comprehensive and integrated approach to further implementation of the Global Plan of Action, advancing the four options that were presented to

⁹ CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/5.

¹⁰ An example of a successful "facilitating mechanism" approach provided by FAO is Global Programme on Integrated Pest Management. Lessons learned from the Global IPM Facility would be applied to the "PGR Facility".

the Working Group. The present document describes the primary functions for the integrative Facilitating Mechanism. The Commission is invited to provide guidance on the establishment and operation of the proposed Facilitating Mechanism.

FAO's commitment to facilitating implementation of the Global Plan of Action

12. The Commission, at its Eighth Regular Session, underlined “the need for FAO to allocate adequate resources from its Regular Budget to support the tasks of monitoring and facilitating implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*”. FAO has consequently taken a number of strategic and programmatic steps, which include greater commitment at all levels to the implementation of the *Plan*, and better visibility of the *Plan* in the Organization’s Programme of Work and Budget. The FAO Conference has approved a Strategic Framework to guide the work of the Organization until the year 2015.¹¹ The Strategic Framework defines a set of strategies that are based on the principles of interdisciplinarity and partnership, and provide an authoritative framework for future programmes to be developed through successive Medium Term Plans (MTPs) and Programmes of Work and Budget. FAO’s Medium Term Plan 2002-7 provided for the development of a mechanism to facilitate implementation of the Global Plan of Action.¹² This is further elaborated in the revised Medium Term Plan 2004-9.¹³

13. The framework provided under the Medium Term Plan – now in place – provides a flexible framework for a mechanism to facilitate the implementation of the *Plan* under the guidance of the Commission and its Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and later, by the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources.

14. This programmatic approach is also in line with to the Council’s directives to the FAO Secretariat “to review its capacities to support the progressive implementation, monitoring and updating of the *Global Plan of Action*” and “to identify possible sources of financing”.¹⁴

15. While FAO’s commitment of resources to implementation of the Global Plan of Action is significant, Regular Programme resources are not adequate to fully support implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The need for funding is clearly acknowledged in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: “*In order to mobilize funding for priority activities, plans and programmes, in particular in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and taking the Global Plan of Action into account, the Governing Body shall periodically establish a target for such funding*” (Article 18.3). Article 18.4a is also relevant: “*The Contracting Parties shall take the necessary and appropriate measures within the Governing Bodies of relevant international mechanisms, funds and bodies to ensure due priority and attention to the effective allocation of predictable and agreed resources for the implementation of plans and programmes under this Treaty.*” Establishment of a dedicated Facilitating Mechanism would, enable FAO to better coordinate and encourage donor support for implementation activities, and enhance or create partnerships in areas of mutual interest; facilitate establishment of country and regional priority needs and portfolio of projects; enhance

¹¹ FAO, 1999. The Strategic Framework for FAO: 2000-2015.

¹² Programme Entity 212P4: *Support to the FAO Global system on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, Major Output 2: *Establishment and support of the Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation of the GPA on PGRFA*.

¹³ Programme Entity 212P4: *Technical support to International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, Major Output 2: *Facilitating Mechanism for the implementation, by all stakeholders, of the Global Plan of Action*. Programme entity 212P4 has been revised in the light of the adoption of the Treaty.

¹⁴ Resolution 1/111 (October 1996).

monitoring and reporting system to better track and evaluate implementation progress. Specific extrabudgetary resources required to develop the proposed Facilitating Mechanism are detailed in section 3 of this document.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATIVE FACILITATING MECHANISM

16. In the proposed approach to the development of the Facilitating Mechanism, the four options considered by the Working Group— the Regular Programme Approach; the Project Model Approach; the Consultative Forum Approach; and the Facility Approach (see CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/5) – have essentially been combined. It was noted in the previous document that the four options are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, combining the four approaches, as components of a single approach will overcome the disadvantages associated with each component, as outlined in the previous paper.

Proposed objectives and activities of the Facilitating Mechanism

17. The overall *objective* for establishing Facilitating Mechanism is to enhance progress in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action at national, regional and international levels, in order to contribute to food security, sustainable agricultural development and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. The Facilitating Mechanism will contribute to the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action and the efforts of the International Alliance against Hunger, created at the World Food Summit: five years later.

18. The Facilitating Mechanism will operate wholly within the policy framework of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, it is envisaged that it would contribute to the implementation of the Funding Strategy established under the Treaty. In line with provisions of the Treaty¹⁵ “priority will be given to the implementation of agreed plans and programmes for farmers in developing countries, and in countries with economies in transition that conserve and sustainably utilize plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.”

19. Main functions of the Facilitating Mechanism would include:

- i. Facilitating work with developing countries and countries with economies in transition to identify urgent needs in the context of the Global Plan of Action, and expressing these in bankable projects, programmes and activities. The portfolio of projects identified and underway would be reported regularly to the Governing Body. The Facilitating Mechanism would also act directly to assist regions and governments in negotiating such project with donors. A series of regional meetings first held in the context of the preparation of the Global Plan of Action, and to be repeated in this biennium (2002/2003) in preparation for the second report on the SOW/PGRFA, may be the occasion to seek regional agreement on such portfolios.
- ii. Facilitating work with donors of all sorts, to agree, where possible, on project coding that reflects the priorities of the Global Plan of Action (to facilitate reporting); the harmonization, where possible, of donor reporting cycles with the Governing Body meetings; establishment of donor-agreed criteria for funding

¹⁵ under Article 18, para 18.5, on Financial Resources. A similar provision is contained in Article 13, on Benefit Sharing13.3

Global Plan of Action activities; etc. The mechanism would also function to enhance current partnership arrangements and investigate the potential for new arrangements among organizations with diverse interests in agriculture biodiversity, food security and rural development.

- iii. Monitoring technical assistance being given in the context of the Global Plan of Action and preparing progress reports.

20. To achieve the main functions of the Facilitating Mechanism described above, a number of specific activities of a normative and operational nature would be required, including, *inter alia*:

- a) Providing or arranging for, on request, appropriate technical assistance or the development and implementation of projects for Global Plan of Action implementation, including pilot projects to strengthen national programmes for plant genetic resources. This activity will benefit from FAO's in-house strengths in project formulation and backstopping, and on the Organization's experience with donor relations.
- b) Developing and testing innovative approaches to Global Plan of Action implementation, through pilot activities, in particular to promote:
 1. the development of effective partnerships between farmers, researchers and extension agents;
 2. linkages between PGRFA management, plant breeding and seed development, in both formal and informal sectors; and
 3. other modalities for increasing the contribution of PGRFA management to food security, sustainable agricultural development and the attainment of sustainable livelihoods.
- c) Maintaining and enhancing communication between diverse programme and project interests within FAO, to ensure that the implementation of the Global Plan of Action contributes towards a number of FAO's strategic objectives, and to ensure integration and cost effective delivery of services and the effective development and transfer of technologies for the benefit of farmers were feasible.
- d) Determining opportunities to enhancing networking among all stakeholders as recommended in document "International Plant Genetic Resources Networks" (CGRFA-9/02/12) to enhance participation in, and coordination among all those engaged in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.
- e) Undertaking efforts to attract new collaborators in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including developing better linkages between conservation, plant breeding and seed production and distribution interests.
- f) Establishing an improved partnership arrangement for implementation of the Global Plan of Action, including FAO, IPGRI, UNF, IFAD and others.
- g) Facilitating communication among countries and donors to enhance awareness of opportunities and needs to mobilize necessary resources.
- h) Convening meetings of stakeholders and donors, as appropriate, to facilitate the identification of potential donors and the mobilisation of resources.

- i) Interacting with donors and development organizations to increase awareness of the roles and values of plant genetic resources and determine opportunities to integrate or incorporate plant genetic resources conservation and sustainable use elements into broader conservation and sustainable development strategies and action plans.
- j) Investigating ways to increase the participation of the private sector in the financing and implementation of projects for the Global Plan of Action, including utilization of economic and other incentives.

21. The Facilitating Mechanism will prepare progress reports of the activities performed and its contributions towards the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The results and the effectiveness of the mechanism should be periodically reviewed and a “sunset clause” should allow the mechanism to be phased out if it is no longer effectively contributing to the facilitation of the implementation of the *Plan*.

3. COOPERATION AND OPERATION THE FACILITATING MECHANISM

22. Improved cooperation and collaboration will advance implementation of the Global Plan of Action building on efforts in several areas. The Facilitating Mechanism would further implementation among co-sponsors, which would include, relevant UN Organizations (e.g., FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD, WB, UNDP, UNEP, GEF), and non-UN organizations (IPGRI and other CGIAR centres, and others). Both the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have indicated their interest in continuing to work closely with FAO to advance implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

23. Given the strong linkage between the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Global Plan of Action, the Facilitating Mechanism will allow for the development of a strategy to integrate activities under the Global Plan of Action and the Treaty. Integration of Global Plan of Action activities with the funding strategy under the Treaty will be particularly valuable. The Governing Body of the Treaty is expected to adopt a funding strategy at its first Session. Considerable preparatory work is anticipated in order to provide the Governing Body of the Treaty and the Commission on Genetic Resources with options for an integrated coherent framework. The Facilitating Mechanism’s technical unit would work closely with the Secretariat for the Commission on Genetic Resources to undertake the necessary preparatory work.

24. The programme of work on agricultural biological diversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the operational programme on agricultural biodiversity of the Global Environmental Facility¹⁶ are developments that may help to mobilize additional financial support for the implementation of priority activities under the Global Plan of Action. The Facilitating Mechanism could play an important role in ensuring that relevant activities under the Global Plan of Action and the Convention on Biological Diversity are coordinated and complementary to promote synergy and to avoid duplication. Priorities would also be established considering the commitments of the World Food Summit.

25. Relevant individual stakeholders, as partners, could accept a leading role either in financing or implementing specific selected “priority activity areas” of the *Plan*, in line with their mandate

¹⁶ See para. 48 and 49 of document CGRFA/WG-PGR-1/01/2, *Progress Report on the Implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

and capabilities. Accordingly, the Facilitating Mechanism would invite stakeholders to report periodically on their plans and on the progress achieved in the implementation of their plans.

26. Over the long-term, as implementation of the Global Plan of Action contributes to food security and rural development, improved awareness of this contribution could attract significant investment from a wide range of organizations that currently are not involved as well as stimulate interest in the private sector. The Facilitating Mechanism would play a key role in attracting new partnerships and investments in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

Organizational Structure of the Facilitating Mechanism

27. The relationship of the Facilitating Mechanism with the Commission, and with the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture would need to be determined by each body. However, it is foreseen that:

- Overall policy direction would be provided by the Commission and its Intergovernmental Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture for the initial phase of operation of the Facilitating Mechanism – 2003-2004;
- Upon entry into force of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the governance of the Facilitating Mechanism should be reviewed by both the Commission and the Governing Body of the Treaty to determine appropriate relationships and governance; and
- Establishment of a small Advisory Committee is recommended to provide technical and operational advice to the Facilitating Mechanism during the initial phase of operation. The Advisory Committee should be regionally and technically balanced.

Proposed Duration

28. It is proposed that the Facilitating Mechanism be established for an initial two-year period (2003-2004), and be reviewed by the Commission at its Tenth Regular Session. If the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has come into force during this period, it is recommended that the Governing Body of the Treaty receive a report at their first Session on the operation of the Facilitating Mechanism so that it could consider any relationship with the Facilitating Mechanism in the context of the Treaty, especially in regard to the Treaty's funding strategy. If the Facilitating Mechanism is continued past the initial phase, its effectiveness should be reviewed every two-years.

Required Extra-budgetary Financial Resources

29. While FAO has dedicated substantial Regular Programme resources for the establishment and operation of the Facilitating Mechanism, extra-budgetary resources are required to undertake all necessary tasks. Resources are required: for staff, travel and consultancies; to convene regional project priority setting meetings; to provide support for the recommended Advisory

Group; and to enable the organization of donor and stakeholders meetings. The overall estimated financial need for the biennium 2003-2004 will be provided to the Commission

4. NEXT STEPS

30. The Facilitating Mechanism should fully operate under the time frame of the Medium Term Plan. A project proposal for complementary extrabudgetary resources is under preparation.

31. A first stakeholder consultation is planned for the present biennium, in line with the programme of work and budget. It will be organized jointly by FAO and IPGRI, in collaboration with IFAD. The consultation will discuss opportunities for promoting implementation of the Global Plan of Action and the needs of stakeholders in this respect, and consider priorities for activities, drawing, *inter alia*, upon section 2 of this document. It is hoped that collaborating organizations will be able to provide contributions to the operation of the Facilitating Mechanism totalling.

32. Further development of the Facilitating Mechanism to enhance implementation of the Global Plan of Action will be informed by:

- a) The views of the Commission.
- b) The outcome of the stakeholder consultation referred to above; and
- c) The experience of ongoing activities to implement the Global Plan of Action;

5. GUIDANCE REQUESTED FROM THE COMMISSION

33. The current document proposes an integrative approach to further implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Establishment of a Facilitating Mechanism is seen as essential to significantly enhance overall implementation of the Global Plan of Action within the context of the proposed approach. Should the Commission agree to the establishment of the Facilitating Mechanism, the Commission may also wish to:

- a) Agree with the proposal for a stakeholder consultation, including the participation of donors, as proposed in paragraph 31;
- b) Encourage countries and all stakeholders to engage actively in the Facilitating Mechanism to promote implementation of the Global Plan of Action;
- c) Encourage financial support for the operation of the Facilitating Mechanism and consider priority activities for the Facilitating Mechanism, including further work to be undertaken by the Secretariat;
- d) Establish Advisory Committee, as proposed in paragraph 27; and

- e) Request the Intergovernmental Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources to provide policy guidance for the further development and operation of the Facilitating Mechanism.