

**SUMMARY OF THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE:
30 JANUARY – 3 FEBRUARY 2017**

The sixteenth session of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA 16) was held from 30 January to 3 February 2017, at FAO headquarters, in Rome, Italy. The session was preceded by a special event on Saturday, 28 January, on “The Contribution of Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture to Resilience,” as well as regional consultations on Sunday, 29 January.

CGRFA 16 approved two draft resolutions to be forwarded to the FAO Conference on: reaffirming the world’s commitment to the Global Plan of Action on Animal Genetic Resources (GPA-ANGR); and the Commission’s contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

CGRFA 16 also considered a series of cross-sectorial matters, including: the preparation of the Report on the State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (SOW-BFA); the role of genetic resources for food security; access and benefit-sharing (ABS) for genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA); review of the Programme of Work on Climate Change and GRFA; and review of the implementation of targets and indicators for GRFA. The Commission also considered: the draft SOW on aquatic genetic resources (AQGR); a review of GPA-ANGR; implementation of the Second GPA for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPA-PGR 2), and preparation of the third Report on the State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; implementation of the GPA for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (GPA-FGR); and micro-organisms and invertebrates. The Commission further reviewed the implementation of its Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) and initiated discussions on the Strategic Plan for the next decade, and considered cooperation with other international instruments and organizations, and administrative matters.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CGRFA

The FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources was established in 1983. Renamed the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 1995, to reflect its broadened mandate to encompass all components of biodiversity for food and agriculture in addition to plants, including animal, aquatic, forest, invertebrate and micro-organism genetic

resources, it currently comprises 178 countries and the European Union (EU). The Commission’s main objectives are to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use.

The Commission develops and monitors the Global System on Plant Genetic Resources and the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources. It also facilitates cooperation between the FAO and other relevant bodies on GRFA policy issues, including the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Its regular sessions are held every two years and extraordinary sessions are convened when necessary. The Commission also maintains three subsidiary bodies, the Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups (ITWGs) on plant, animal and forest genetic resources, to address specific issues in these sectors.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES: The development of the Global System on Plant Genetic Resources began in 1983. The first Report on the State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was presented at the fourth International Technical Conference held in Leipzig, Germany, in 1996. The Global Plan of Action (GPA), adopted through the Leipzig Declaration, comprises a set of activities covering capacity building, as well as *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of plant

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GRFA. The GPA for the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant GRFA also recognizes the crucial roles played by farmers, seed curators and breeders in managing these resources.

ITPGR: The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR) entered into force on 29 June 2004. With 141 parties to date, the ITPGR is a legally binding instrument that targets the conservation and sustainable use of plant GRFA and equitable benefit-sharing for sustainable agriculture and food security. The ITPGR established a Multilateral System (MLS) of ABS, which facilitates access to a specified list of plant GRFA, balanced by benefit-sharing in the areas of information exchange, technology transfer, capacity building and commercial development. The list of crops contained in Annex I defines the scope of the MLS, and includes 35 crop genera and 29 forage species.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES: Initiated in 1993, the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources provides a technical and operational framework for assisting countries. It comprises: an intergovernmental mechanism for policy development; a country-based global infrastructure to help states plan and implement national strategies; a technical support programme aimed at the country level; and a reporting and evaluation system to guide the Strategy's implementation and facilitate collaboration. A communication and information tool, called the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System, assists in the Strategy's implementation. In 2007, the first International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources presented the first State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture report (SOW-ANGR) and adopted the GPA for ANGR and the Interlaken Declaration on ANGR.

MYPOW AND STRATEGIC PLAN: To enable the Commission to fulfill its full mandate in the medium and long term, the Commission, at its eleventh session held in Rome, Italy, in June 2007, adopted its MYPOW, a rolling 10-year work plan covering the totality of biodiversity for food and agriculture, including plant, animal, forest, aquatic, micro-organism and invertebrate genetic resources, and major outputs and milestones. The MYPOW also covers a range of cross-sectorial matters relevant to several or all components of biodiversity for food and agriculture. At its twelfth session in Rome, Italy, in 2009, the Commission adopted its Strategic Plan 2010-2017 identifying processes and cooperation needed to achieve the agreed outputs and milestones. The MYPOW and Strategic Plan outline a 10-year cycle, during which the Commission aims to: conduct a global assessment (SOW-Report); adopt or update a GPA; develop guidance for implementation for plant, animal, forest and aquatic GRFA, and micro-organisms and invertebrates; and publish a global assessment of the SOW-BFA after the completion of each cycle.

CGRFA 12: At its twelfth session, held in October 2009 in Rome, the Commission adopted the Strategic Plan 2010-2017 for implementation of the MYPOW, identifying processes and cooperation needed to achieve the agreed outputs and milestones. The Commission also adopted its new rules of procedure and a resolution on policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA. It agreed to the funding strategy for the implementation of the GPA on ANGR; approved the outline of the state of the world report on FGR; and agreed to create an ITWG on FGR.

CGRFA 13: At its thirteenth session, held in July 2011 in Rome, the Commission adopted the second GPA for Plant GRFA, a major milestone in its MYPOW. CGRFA 13 also amended its MYPOW to lay out major outputs and milestones between 2013 and 2021; agreed on the need for a roadmap or work programme on climate change and GRFA; decided to establish an *Ad Hoc*

Technical Working Group on ABS for GRFA; and addressed cooperation with other processes including the ITPGR and the CBD.

CGRFA 14: At its fourteenth session, held April 2013 in Rome, the Commission adopted the GPA for FGR, the genebank standards for plant GRFA, the Programme of Work on Climate Change and GRFA, and the Strategic Plan 2014-2021 for the implementation of the MYPOW. The Commission also endorsed the draft guidelines on *in vivo* conservation of ANGR, and decided that the scope of the SOW-AQGR Report would include farmed aquatic species and their wild relatives in areas within national jurisdiction. The Commission also adopted a series of mostly procedural decisions that clarify the Commission's role with regard to the interconnected policy environment on ABS, climate change and AQGR will be to provide targeted input to policy-makers as well as to mainstream GRFA across relevant international processes.

CGRFA 15: At its fifteenth session, held in January 2015 in Rome, Italy, the Commission: adopted the second SOW-ANGR; welcomed the first set of Elements to Facilitate Domestic Implementation of ABS in the different Subsectors of GRFA, inviting CGRFA members to use the Elements and provide feedback on their use; endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Integration of Genetic Diversity into National Adaptation Planning; and endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Policies, Programmes and National and Regional Plans of Action on Nutrition. The Commission also considered the role of biotechnology for the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA.

CGRFA 16 REPORT

On Monday morning, 30 January 2017, CGRFA 16 Chair Cho Chang Yeon (Republic of Korea) opened the meeting. FAO Deputy Director-General Daniel Gustafson highlighted, among other matters: the establishment of a new FAO department on Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water; the completion of the CGRFA's first MYPOW cycle; and FAO's role regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Stressing the role of genetic resources for adaptation, René Castro Salazar, Assistant Director-General, Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water Department, FAO, said that while agriculture is often considered the "culprit" for contributing to climate change, it is also an important part of the solution.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD Executive Secretary drew attention to, *inter alia*: mainstreaming biodiversity in different sectors; the voluntary guidelines to facilitate domestic implementation of ABS provisions; and ongoing work on pollinators, pollination and food production. Noting that biodiversity for food and agriculture is included in the SDGs, Irene Hoffmann, CGRFA Secretary, highlighted that some countries are prioritizing SDG Target 2.5 (GRFA conservation) in their national implementation plans.

Chair Cho Chang Yeon reported on the special event on "The Contribution of Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture to Resilience" held on Saturday, 28 January, which highlighted the link between biodiversity for food and agriculture, ecosystem services and resilience, and how they all contribute to strengthening emergency responses.

Delegates then adopted the meeting agenda (CGRFA-16/17/1 and 2 Rev.1). On Tuesday morning, delegates established an open-ended committee to review and revise, as appropriate, the draft strategic plan and MYPOW 2018-2027 (CGRFA-16/17/22), and to consider major outputs and milestones to be included.

The following report summarizes discussions and outcomes under each agenda item, which were finalized on Friday in the context of the adoption of the report of the meeting.

CROSS-SECTORIAL MATTERS

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S BIODIVERSITY FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: This item was discussed in plenary on Monday and in informal consultations from Tuesday to Thursday.

On Monday, delegates considered reports on preparation of the SOW-BFA (CGRFA-16/17/3), needs and possible actions (CGRFA-16/17/4), the SOW-BFA itself (CGRFA-16/17/Inf.9) and submissions (CGRFA-16/17/Inf.11.1-6). The Secretariat recalled relevant deadlines, including for submitting country reports by 31 March 2017 and commenting on a revised draft by February 2018. Many requested extending the timeline for submitting country reports, citing the small number of reports submitted to date, challenges in data collection, data gaps and variations among countries, and time needed to conduct extensive stakeholder consultations.

On needs and actions to be identified in the report, the African Regional Group (Africa) called for existing capacity development efforts to include projects with tangible, ground-level impact. The Asian Regional Group (Asia) suggested prioritizing the most urgent needs. The Near East Regional Group (Near East) highlighted incentives to develop crop varieties for climate change adaptation.

Argentina requested mentioning the need for multi-stakeholder, intersectoral and international cooperation.

Brazil recommended a balanced approach to considering the contributions and challenges of different production systems. Canada said that the proposed plan of action should not duplicate other work under the Commission. Sudan stressed collaboration and synergy to include biodiversity in concrete plans, and called for financial, capacity-building and technical support.

The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) called for effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in negotiating ABS arrangements and other frameworks. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) proposed taxes as disincentives for using pesticides that damage the environment. Bioversity International highlighted its programme on under-utilized crops.

On synergies, Mexico recommended that the Commission take decisions of other international agreements into account in its own decisions, the MYPOW and the Strategic Plan. The EU, with Switzerland: requested timely dissemination of related reports and studies; and encouraged further collaboration with the CBD. Canada and Switzerland proposed taking relevant SDGs into account. Norway, with the Near East, suggested the FAO Council adopt a resolution to increase awareness of the Commission's work and attract additional funds taking advantage of the international SDG momentum.

On Wednesday, Johanna Wider (Germany) reported on informal discussions on developing a schedule for finalizing the SOW-BFA Report and identifying further needs and possible actions. On Thursday, she noted agreement on: submitting country reports by 30 June 2017; making the revised SOW-BFA, thematic studies and regional synthesis reports available in March 2018; and completing the final SOW-BFA during the second half of 2018. On needs and possible actions, she said the group had agreed that: each region will nominate up to three focal points by 1 September 2017 to facilitate the collection of views; and the Secretariat will convene a meeting in June 2018. The European

Regional Group (Europe) recommended budgeting for translation of the report's summary in all UN languages, without relying on extra-budgetary funds.

On Friday, during the closing plenary, delegates discussed whether to include a paragraph in the decision on inviting countries to respond to the findings of their country reports through adequate policies, programmes and activities at national and regional levels, as appropriate. They finally agreed on language inviting countries to "consider" the findings of their country reports when adopting programme policies and activities at national and regional levels, as appropriate.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission invites countries: that have not yet done so to submit their reports by the agreed date of 30 June 2017, preferably using the full guidelines; and to consider the findings of their country reports when adopting programme policies and activities at national and regional levels, as appropriate. The Commission further requests the Secretariat to: make available the revised draft report, the thematic studies and regional synthesis reports by 1 March 2018 and invite comments by 16 June 2018; and finalize the report in the second half of 2018, present it in relevant international meetings, and publish an in-brief version in all FAO languages.

On developing needs and possible actions as part of the report's conclusions, the Commission requests the Secretariat to: invite comments by 15 April 2018, and review and revise the needs and actions in the light of comments, suggestions and the findings of the revised draft report; and convene, subject to the availability of funds, a three-day meeting in June 2018 of the national focal points (NFPs), to be identified by the regions, to review and revise draft needs and possible actions and submit them for consideration by CGRFA 17.

THE ROLE OF GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD SECURITY: On Monday, delegates considered options for raising awareness of the role of GRFA for food security (CGRFA-16/17/5).

Brazil suggested further integrating the work of the Commission into FAO's Strategic Framework and further promoting collaboration with FAO's technical committees, including the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The EU, with Switzerland, supported integrating GRFA into national food security and nutrition policies, and preparing a background paper defining the contribution of GRFA to food security and the SDGs. Sudan called for support for science-based awareness raising.

Ecuador suggested reporting on the implementation of national policies on food sovereignty and security. Chile, the US, Argentina and Ghana preferred using the term "food security" and not "food sovereignty." Africa, opposed by the US, proposed adding "fair and equitable benefit-sharing" when referring to the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA. Delegates agreed to put the text in brackets. The US, supported by Canada, stated that awareness raising needs to remain under FAO's mandate.

Togo noted the participation of breeders and farmers. Bhutan and Kenya recommended education programmes in schools and communities.

Supported by Norway and Brazil, Oxfam Novib recommended close collaboration between governments, communities, breeding institutions and seed banks while testing disaster preparedness measures and providing emergency relief. IPC called for considering the specific contribution of GRFA in the context of the work of the CFS, noting implications for intellectual property rights and farmers' rights.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission invites countries to raise awareness of the roles of the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA and of ABS for GRFA for food security and nutrition, and to integrate GRFA into their food security and nutrition policies. It further requests FAO to: help countries regarding the aforementioned actions; prepare a study addressing the contribution of GRFA to the four pillars of food security and the achievement of relevant SDGs, inviting inputs by 31 March 2017; report on its awareness-raising activities; and further integrate work on GRFA into its Programme of Work and budget.

ABS FOR GRFA: ABS in the context of GRFA was discussed in plenary on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and in a contact group on Wednesday night and throughout the day Thursday.

On Monday, delegates considered CGRFA 16/17/6 on the third session of the Team of Technical and Legal Experts on ABS (TTLE-ABS), and elaboration of subsector-specific elements (CGRFA 16/17/7). Javad Mozafari Hashjin, Chair, TTLE-ABS, highlighted agricultural sector needs for special arrangements on ABS, and for subsector specific guidelines for implementing ABS at the national level. The Secretariat outlined options for further intersessional work, including requesting additional input from the ITWGs, a joint workshop with the CBD Secretariat, and another meeting of the TTLE-ABS.

The discussions focused on the need for subsector elements, their format and purpose, the intersessional process, and how to address digital sequence information.

ABS elements for subsectors: The Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) supported national dissemination of existing ABS elements, stating that subsector-specific elements are unnecessary. Asia stressed that elements should provide simple guidance focusing on GRFA utilization and explaining subsector specific characteristics. Canada proposed that the Secretariat gather information and country experiences on existing utilization practices. Sudan asked for studies on national benefit-sharing and international sharing of technologies.

The EU supported gathering information from countries and IPLCs on obtaining and granting prior informed consent and experiences with existing ABS legislation. The US suggested that regions participate in the process. Brazil requested FAO support for developing national ABS measures, and suggested preparing detailed guidance for discussions in the subsector ITWGs.

In the contact group on Wednesday, delegates agreed to develop “non-prescriptive explanatory notes describing, within the context of the ABS Elements, the distinctive features and specific practices of different subsectors of GRFA.”

Intersessional process: GRULAC said the ABS workshop should be co-organized with the CBD and the ITPGR to discuss lessons learned. The EU said it should also consider micro-organisms and invertebrates, and suggested that the Secretariat provide guidance for ITWG consideration of workshop outcomes. Canada suggested that the draft subsector-specific elements be reviewed by the ITWGs prior to reconvening the TTLE-ABS. The US preferred inviting the CBD Secretariat to attend, rather than co-organizing the workshop.

On a proposed study on utilization of GRFA, the US proposed that the ITWGs review it before sending it to the TTLE-ABS. Brazil asked that the study also address access to GRFA.

Digital Sequence Information: GRULAC requested that CGRFA consider genetic sequencing data related to ABS in the context of GRFA and conduct a study. Africa said the issue should also be discussed by the ITWGs for each subsector. The EU

called for a scoping or exploratory study to be forwarded to the CBD. Canada suggested the Commission prepare a submission of views and submit it to the CBD.

The US preferred the term “genetic sequencing data,” stating that these are a non-physical resource with characteristics that differ from those of genetic resources. Brazil requested that CGRFA 17 discuss the use and misuse of GRFA enabled by technological development.

On Thursday, after extended debate in the contact group, delegates agreed on a process to address digital sequence data, including an exploratory, fact-finding, scoping study that will feed into the CBD’s relevant work. In plenary, during the consideration of the MYPOW, delegates debated whether the CGRFA should address genetic sequence data only in the context of ABS, as requested by Namibia, Brazil, Iran, Tunisia and Cameroon, or also as part of biotechnologies for the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA, as preferred by Canada, the US and Europe. Following lengthy deliberations, delegates agreed to amend a proposal by Namibia and establish a separate work stream on digital sequence information that will address implications for conservation, sustainable use and ABS.

On Friday, during the adoption of the meetings report, Canada and the US requested that the term “digital sequence information on GRFA” be placed in quotation marks throughout the document. Delegates also agreed to: add three paragraphs in the MYPOW section of the report, stating that the Commission decided to establish a new work stream titled “digital sequence information on GRFA”; request the Secretariat to prepare an exploratory fact-finding scoping study on this issue to facilitate its consideration at CGRFA 17; and invite members to submit relevant information for this study.

On Friday, delegates agreed to place the term “digital sequence information” in quotation marks throughout the document, and to add several paragraphs to the report’s section on the MYPOW to reflect the Commission’s new work stream, including: a request to the Secretariat to conduct an exploratory, fact-finding scoping study on “digital sequence information,” a request to submit that study to the CBD Conference of the Parties (COP); and a request to members to provide relevant information for that study. When discussing the MYPOW, delegates also adjusted the matrix displaying MYPOW’s work stream to reflect these changes.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission, *inter alia*:

- requests the Secretariat to continue working on ABS for GRFA aiming to assist members to reflect in their ABS measures, *inter alia*, the distinctive features of different subsectors with a view to contribute to the achievement of SDG targets 2.5 (conservation and sustainable use of CGRFA and ABS), and 15.6 (ABS);
- agrees to produce non-prescriptive explanatory notes describing, within the context of ABS elements, the distinctive features and specific practices of different subsectors of GRFA; and
- invites members, observers and other stakeholders to provide relevant inputs for such explanatory notes.

Regarding the process for developing draft explanatory notes, the Commission requests:

- the Secretariat to convene, in collaboration with the CBD and ITPGR Secretariats, an international workshop, and make the outcomes of the workshop available to the Commission, the ITWGs, the seven nominated experts on micro-organisms and invertebrate GRFA, and the TTLE-ABS, for their information and consideration;

- the TTLE-ABS to provide feedback for the Secretariat to prepare draft explanatory notes;
- the ITWGs and the experts on micro-organisms and invertebrates to review the draft explanatory notes;
- the TTLE-ABS to consolidate the draft explanatory notes considering these reviews; and
- the Secretariat to gather, compile and make available information from countries, IPLCs and stakeholders as input for developing the explanatory notes.

The Commission also:

- requests the Secretariat to continue strengthening collaboration with the ITPGR Secretariat to promote coherence with regard to ABS; and
- invites the ITPGR Governing Body to continue to closely coordinate with the Commission to address the distinctive features and uses of PGR in a complementary way, bearing in mind ongoing processes.

In the section on Implementation of the MYPOW, the Commission:

- decides to establish a new work stream, “digital sequence information on GRFA”;
- requests the Secretariat to prepare, subject to available funds, an exploratory fact-finding study on “digital sequence information for GRFA” for CGRFA 17 consideration;
- requests the Secretariat to submit, after review by the Bureau, a draft of that study to the CBD COP; and
- requests the Secretariat to invite members to submit relevant information for the study.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GRFA: On Tuesday, delegates considered a review of the Commission’s work in this area (CGRFA-16/17/8). Cautioning against overlaps with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the CBD, Asia and Africa requested further support to mainstream genetic diversity in national adaptation planning. Africa and the Near East emphasized projects with tangible impacts on the ground, with the Near East urging FAO to conduct technical work on implementation, in addition to policy development.

On conducting a country-driven global assessment of climate change effects and GRFA adaptation measures, the EU and Brazil called for introducing simple questionnaires and accelerating the process to take advantage of the momentum following the adoption of the Paris Agreement. Brazil suggested further integrating the Commission’s work in the FAO’s organizational strategy on climate change.

The US, Canada and the EU said the global assessment of climate change effects and GRFA adaptation measures, and the voluntary guidelines for integrating GRFA into national adaptation planning, should also address mitigation. Ecuador said the CGRFA’s work will improve regional planning. Nepal asked to address linkages between global, regional and local perspectives.

Ethiopia prioritized technical assistance for countries most affected by climate change. Africa and the Near East called for climate finance mobilization for GRFA conservation and sustainable use, with Egypt also emphasizing finance for climate change adaptation.

Biodiversity International called for strengthening capacities and bringing together relevant stakeholders. The IPC highlighted farmers’ seed exchange practices, and called for agro-ecology practices that contribute to building resilience. The Secretariat highlighted opportunities to collaborate with the climate community, including through national-level proposals to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

On Friday, during the closing plenary, Canada clarified that the proposal for a country-driven global assessment on genetic resources in relation to climate change should address the role of genetic resources in adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change. Delegates also agreed that the reporting process would be in collaboration with “relevant international entities and national authorities,” and not “climate change authorities.”

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission:

- requests FAO to ensure that the Commission’s work on GRFA and climate change is fully integrated into the organization’s Strategic Framework and Climate Change Strategy;
- invites the Secretariat to continue raising awareness on the importance and potential role of GRFA in light of climate change and promote the mainstreaming of these resources into climate change-related programmes and policies, including at national and regional levels;
- invites countries to implement the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Integration of Genetic Diversity into National Climate Change Adaptation Planning and provide feedback to the Commission;
- requests FAO to assist countries in the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines;
- invites countries to integrate genetic resource diversity into national climate change planning; and
- requests the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the preparation of a country-driven global assessment of climate change effects on genetic resources and related adaptation and mitigation measures, for CGRFA 17.

TARGETS AND INDICATORS: On Tuesday, delegates considered CGRFA-16/17/9 on FAO’s role in the development and use of indicators in the SDGs monitoring and reporting process. The discussion focused on data collection methods and experiences, guidance and support for countries in collecting data, and harmonizing data collection with SDG reporting.

Europe and Norway stressed the role of the Commission in monitoring SDG Target 2.5. Brazil proposed “inviting countries to actively engage” in voluntary reviews for annual SDG reporting and monitoring, rather than “requesting” them to “collect data.” Canada called for harmonizing reporting against the SDG targets and indicators and the GPAs. The Secretariat said that data for SDG Target 2.5 will be generated through GPA monitoring, noting that information can be reported at any time to FAO’s information systems on plants and animals.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission requests FAO to continue contributing to the development and use of international targets and indicators related to GRFA, including to the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, to ensure consistency and coherence and avoid duplication of reporting. It further invites countries to actively engage with the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, including through the preparation of voluntary national reviews of biodiversity for food and agriculture.

AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES

On Tuesday, delegates considered the report of the ninth session of the *Ad hoc* ITWG-AQGR, (CGRFA-16/17/10), the draft SOW-AQGR (CGRFA-16/17/Inf.13) and an update on status and activities (CGRFA-16/17/11), with a view to finalizing the report.

GRULAC and Europe encouraged countries to submit national reports, including revised versions, to address knowledge gaps and achieve a globally representative final report. Africa

requested extending the deadline for submissions to 30 June 2017. Europe supported preparing a revised draft report, based on submissions received by 30 March 2017, thematic studies and ITWG advice. Europe also questioned the feasibility, timeline and budget implications of a second session of the ITWG-AQGR. Asia proposed making the ITWG-AQGR a regular rather than an *ad hoc* ITWG. The US noted that the Working Group should continue on an *ad hoc* basis.

On Friday, during closing plenary, the US repeated that the ITWG-AQGR should continue on an *ad hoc* basis.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission invites countries that have not yet done so to nominate NFPs, and to submit or revise country reports by 30 June 2017, as appropriate. It requests FAO to prepare a revised draft SOW-AQGR report, taking into account information contained in the country reports, the thematic background studies, information by international organizations and the comments and recommendations provided by the Commission and its ITWG-AQGR.

Regarding the revised draft report, the Commission further: invites countries to comment on it; requests the Committee on Fisheries and its subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to review it; recommends that a second meeting of ITWG-AQGR be convened to review it in light of all other comments and inputs; and calls on governments and donors to make available the financial resources necessary for its finalization, translation, publication, printing and distribution.

ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES

Delegates discussed ANGR on Tuesday. Deidre Januarie (Namibia), Chair of the ITWG-ANGR, presented the report of the group's ninth session (CGRFA-16/17/12).

STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION: Delegates reviewed reports on the status of ANGR (CGRFA/16/17/Inf. 15) and GPA-ANGR implementation (CGRFA-16/17/13).

Many regions supported linking the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS) with other national and regional databases, and encouraged updating and harmonizing national databases and developing uniform criteria for mapping country data. Participants also suggested: enabling a "science-based evaluation" of the provision of ecosystem services; revising and modernizing DAD-IS; and including information on domesticated honeybees and, potentially, other insect pollinators.

On the funding strategy, Europe called for mobilization of financial resources through partnerships with other organizations and mechanisms. Several delegates called for support to developing countries for classification of ANGR, and for a new mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the GPA.

On Friday, delegates further agreed to request FAO to "develop" rather than "explore" options to improve linkages between DAD-IS and other databases, and to potentially include other pollinators, in addition to "insect" pollinators. Argentina requested adding a reference stating that incentives for locally-adapted livestock and ecosystem services be developed "in compliance with international trade regulations."

REVIEW OF THE GPA-ANGR: Delegates considered suggested guidance for the review and possible update of the GPA-ANGR (CGRFA-16/17/14), including a draft resolution for the FAO Conference reaffirming the world's commitment to GPA-ANGR implementation. The draft resolution addressed both the status of implementation and the review of the GPA-ANGR.

Many supported preparing a draft resolution for the FAO Conference. On small-scale livestock keepers and pastoralists that provide ecosystem services, Europe and Sudan debated whether

to delete a reference to "small-scale," agreeing eventually to refer to "livestock keepers and pastoralists, especially small-scale ones." Canada suggested considering the distinctive features of the ANGR subsector in ABS legislation "where appropriate." On a paragraph highlighting the integration of animal genetic diversity for adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change, the US requested to add "and other efforts to address climate change, as applicable." Delegates agreed to submit a revised draft resolution to the FAO Conference.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission endorses the ITWG-ANGR report and requests FAO to, *inter alia*:

- develop options for improving linkages between DAD-IS and other databases, explore why so many breeds in DAD-IS have unknown risk status, and consider including domestic honeybees and potentially other pollinators in DAD-IS; and
- review methods for identification and valuation of the ecosystem services provided by livestock breeds for consideration by the ITWG-ANGR.

The draft resolution (CGRFA-16/17/DR Appendix 1) provides for the FAO Conference to invite members to:

- develop or strengthen national policies, strategies and action plans for the management of ANGR, furthering GPA-ANGR implementation;
- integrate animal genetic diversity into national climate change adaptation planning or other efforts to address climate change;
- address the challenge of a shrinking natural resource base for animal production;
- protect the ANGR resource base by promoting appropriate breeding and husbandry practices to control factors that contribute to erosion of ANGR diversity, and make efforts to improve animal health;
- support the continued provision of livestock ecosystem services; and
- consider the distinctive features of the ANGR subsector in domestic ABS legislation.

It also provides for the FAO Conference to request organizations to, *inter alia*:

- continue monitoring current, new and emerging challenges in ANGR management and facilitate reporting on such issues under the GPA-ANGR, including by further strengthening DAD-IS;
- review progress in GPA-ANGR implementation and its relevance in light of new and emerging challenges and opportunities in ANGR management; and
- further support development and implementation of measures and tools to support mainstreaming of biodiversity in the livestock sector with a view to supporting the transition towards sustainable food and agricultural systems.

PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

On Wednesday, William Wigmore (Cook Islands), ITWG-PGR Vice-Chair, presented the ITWG-PGR 8 Report (CGRFA-16/17/15), and delegates made general statements.

REVIEW OF GPA-PGR 2 IMPLEMENTATION: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced documents on status of implementation (CGRFA-16/17/16) and related assessments, consultation, feedback and draft voluntary guidelines (CGRFA-16/17/16 Inf. 17.1, 17.2, and 18-21).

The discussion focused on: simplifying reporting procedures; *ex situ* conservation, national seed systems; the revised draft voluntary guidelines on national-level conservation and use of

farmers' varieties and landraces, as well as of crop wild relatives; and a proposed global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management for PGR.

All regions supported simplifying the reporting format for the World Information and Early Warning System (WIEWS) for PGR, with Asia noting that lack of understanding hindered reporting.

On *ex situ* conservation, Asia, the EU, Canada, Norway, Switzerland and the US supported strengthening the links between different conservation strategies. The EU called for funding for regeneration of accessions or collections at all levels. Canada said support for genebanks should also improve access to germplasm for breeding. Ecuador and Mexico stressed the need for characterization, in addition to accession.

On strengthening national seed systems, the Southwest Pacific Regional Group (Southwest Pacific), Africa, and the Near East called for technical and scientific cooperation. Syria highlighted the need for conservation of PGR for countries suffering from humanitarian crises or war.

On the guidelines, Norway, with Switzerland, suggested referring to "sustainable use" throughout the document, and, with IPC and Oxfam Novib, adding reference to ITPGR Article 9 (farmers' rights). Bioversity International suggested references to mainstreaming on-farm conservation and revision of farmers' varieties.

On the proposed global network, GRULAC stressed farmer participation, establishing community seed banks and, with the Near East, safeguarding farmers' rights. Africa called for feasibility studies and innovative methodologies on efforts to conserve PGR *in situ*.

Responding to questions, the Secretariat clarified that the global network for *in situ* conservation and on-farm management will be owned by its members, not FAO. Canada suggested that *in situ* conservation of PGR and conservation of crop wild relatives be addressed through separate networks.

On Friday, during the closing plenary, Canada suggested, and delegates agreed, to refer to: availability of "resources," rather than "funds" necessary for the regeneration of accessions; and the option to report on a subset of indicators, regarding WIEWS.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission stresses the need for a greater number of country reports to be submitted, and expresses concern regarding the high number of accessions due for regeneration, requesting governments and relevant international organizations to provide the necessary resources for their regeneration. It further endorses the voluntary guidelines on national-level conservation of crop wild relatives and wild food plants, and refers the revised draft voluntary guidelines on national-level conservation and use of farmers' varieties/landraces to the ITWG-PGR for further review.

The Commission further requests FAO to, *inter alia*:

- continue supporting NFPs in their reporting on the implementation of the second GPA, as well as countries in their efforts to conserve PGR *in situ* and on-farm, maintain genebanks and strengthen the links and complementarity between *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation;
- publish the voluntary guidelines on national-level conservation of crop wild relatives and wild food plants;
- consult Commission members and observers on options to further simplify the reporting format;
- complete the restructuring of WIEWS and publish through it information on the implementation of the second GPA and SDG Target 2.5;

- continue supporting countries in strengthening their crop improvement and plant breeding capacities, and report to ITWG-PGR 9;
- support countries in the development and revision of their national seed policy and legislation; and
- continue strengthening national and regional PGR conservation networks.

SOW-PGR 3 Preparation: On Wednesday, the Secretariat presented CGRFA-16/17/17 on the preparation of the Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (SOW-PGR 3).

Europe recommended strengthening the links between the second GPA and the SDGs, and encouraged FAO to address these linkages as part of its climate adaptation work, and to access further funds through the GCF.

On a list of proposed thematic studies on climate change, nutrition, characterization and evaluation of germplasm, safety duplicates, and new plant breeding technologies, Europe prioritized those "purely related" to PGR, whereas Asia said all topics are of key importance. Africa proposed combining some of the studies. GRULAC proposed aligning WIEWS's design with reporting requirements under SDG Target 2.5. The US supported collaboration with the FAO Statistics Division.

On Friday, during the closing plenary, Europe suggested adding that the Commission endorsed the simplification of the reporting format, to which delegates agreed.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission endorses the revised timeline for the preparation of the third SOW-PGR, the monitoring of the implementation of GPA 2, and the simplification of the reporting format. It invites donors to provide extra-budgetary resources to support the preparation of the third SOW-PGR, ensure the participation of developing countries, and facilitate the preparation of thematic studies and the publication of the report. The Commission further requests: FAO to adjust the list of thematic studies and consult the ITWG-PGR and the Commission before work commences, as well as to assist countries in assessing their national reporting obligations, and improve capacity to report on the SDG indicator 2.5.1 (number of PGR and ANGR for food and agriculture secured in conservation facilities); and the Secretariat to continue collaborating with the FAO Statistics Division.

FOREST GENETIC RESOURCES

On Wednesday, Sibidou Sina (Burkina Faso), Chair of the ITWG-FGR, presented the report of the group's fourth session (CGRFA-16/17/18) and delegates made general statements. The Secretariat then introduced the documents on the status of GPA implementation (CGRFA-16/17/19) and monitoring of implementation (CGRFA-16/17/20).

On GPA monitoring, Africa said the guidelines should be in harmony with existing national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) under the CBD, and called for a strategy for funding implementation. Europe called for strengthening the role of regional networks, with Bioversity International calling for political and financial support to assist them. Sudan requested adding rangelands to forestry resources and IPC expressed concern that FGR currently include mono-cropping plantations for timber and paper production, and called for consultations with indigenous and farmer communities on regional network initiatives.

On a set of reporting guidelines, Europe suggested working in consultation with the ITWG-FGR and NFPs. GRULAC and the Near East said reporting should be simplified. Others called for financial support for quality and timely data collection.

Europe, Asia and GRULAC recommended adopting the proposed set of targets, indicators and verifiers in their present form. The US proposed that countries identify the indicators most relevant to their own progress.

On Friday, during the closing plenary, Brazil suggested, and delegates agreed, to add, on the preparation of the draft guidelines, language to requesting FAO to consider the interface between the reporting systems of FGR and PGR in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission:

- calls upon countries to continue implementing the GPA to contribute to sustainable forest management, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other relevant international commitments on forests; and
 - encourages countries to support, as appropriate, the regional networks on FGR and contribute to the activities of these networks to strengthen regional collaboration on FGR.
- It requests FAO to, *inter alia*:
- prepare voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for FGR, taking into account existing guidelines for the preparation of national forest programmes and for the formulation of forest policy to avoid duplication of work;
 - prepare draft guidelines for the preparation of country progress reports, as well as Reporting Guidelines for Regional Networks and International Organizations;
 - consult the Working Group on FGR and the NFPs of the SOW-FGR, by electronic means, on the draft Guidelines for the Preparation of Country Progress Reports, prior to their finalization by 31 March 2017;
 - consider the interface between the reporting systems of FGR and PGR in order to avoid duplication of efforts; and
 - invite regional networks on FGR and relevant international organizations to report on their contributions to the implementation of the GPA.

The Commission also adopts the proposed targets, indicators and verifiers for FGR, to be used as assessment tools to monitor the implementation of the GPA, and the proposed schedule for monitoring the implementation of the GPA.

MICRO-ORGANISMS AND INVERTEBRATES

STATUS OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK ON MICRO-ORGANISMS AND INVERTEBRATES: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced documents on the status of work (CGRFA-16/17/21), the status of pollinators (CGRFA-16/17/Inf. 22), and soil biodiversity (CGRFA-16/17/Inf. 23). Europe, Africa, Brazil, Canada and Ecuador supported requesting FAO to prepare a draft work plan for future work on the sustainable use and conservation of micro-organisms and invertebrates, for CGRFA 17. The US preferred to await the completion of the SOW-BFA before commenting on the need for additional work.

Asia suggested the Secretariat establish a platform on country information systems related to honeybees, and to consider other types of pollinators. Thailand proposed considering micro-organisms involved in ruminant digestion. Africa emphasized the role of micro-organisms in climate change adaptation and food security.

On Friday, during the closing plenary, Canada suggested, and delegates agreed, to insert a reference, in the draft work plan to consult with the ITWG-ANGR on particular pollinators, such as honeybees.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-15/15/DR), the Commission, *inter alia*:

- requests the Secretariat to invite countries to provide their views on the development of a draft work plan for future work;
- requests FAO to prepare the draft work plan;
- reiterates the importance of pollinators, in particular honeybees, micro-organisms of relevance to ruminant digestion, food processing and agro-industrial processes, of biological control agents and of soil organisms, and the reflection of these groups in the draft work, in consultation with the ITWG-ANGR for particular pollinators like honeybees; and
- stresses the need for FAO to continue building partnerships with other international organizations and initiatives to mobilize expertise on micro-organisms and invertebrates, and requests FAO to reflect this in the draft work plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND MYPOW 2018-2027

Delegates addressed the draft strategic plan and MYPOW on Monday and Thursday, and in an open-ended committee on Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday, delegates also considered a draft resolution on the Commission's contribution to achieving the SDGs.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND MYPOW: On Monday, delegates exchanged initial views over the review of implementation of the Commission's MYPOW and the draft strategic plan (2018-2027) (CGRFA-16/17/22). Several delegates recommended reflecting major international commitments in the new MYPOW. Canada, with the US, suggested updating the strategic plan every other session.

In the open-ended committee on the draft strategic plan and MYPOW, delegates debated, among other matters, options for frequency of review of the MYPOW, which previously had been treated as a rolling plan that was updated at every Commission session. Some favored conducting a mid-term review of the MYPOW four years after adoption of the strategic plan. Delegates addressed whether the scope of the invertebrates and micro-organisms subsector should also include pollinators.

On Thursday, Médi Mounqui (Cameroon), Chair of the MYPOW committee, reported that the programming matrix covering CGRFA 17-21 had been successfully developed, addressing all issues except matters related to ABS and biotechnologies, which were being dealt with in ongoing discussions.

On Thursday, Bernd Bultemeier, FAO, presented the methodology and findings of an evaluation of FAO's contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of GRFA. CGRFA Secretary Irene Hoffmann presented the draft strategic plan 2018-2027 (CGRFA-16/17/22), containing: goals and targets aligned with relevant SDGs; a draft MYPOW with suggested outputs, milestones and activities, and suggested activities in preparation for CGRFA 17 and 18. She also presented a document on funding, including a proposal to establish a multi-donor trust fund (CGRFA-16/17/23); and suggested indicators to measure progress against the strategic plan (CGRFA-16/17/Inf.24).

On the draft strategic plan, Europe proposed inviting members to comment and discussing a revised plan at CGRFA 17. Brazil registered concern about references to ABS. The US disagreed with the targets, saying they did not correspond to the SDG

targets. Mexico wished to include a reference to “benefits and traditional knowledge be shared on an equitable basis” in the goal on ABS.

On the MYPOW, Europe supported the inclusion of biotechnologies, climate change, and a concept note on health in the outputs and milestones. Canada and the US called for integrating work on health and nutrition. The US supported work on climate change as a cross-cutting issue, and suggested addressing all technical aspects of genetic sequence data as part of biotechnologies, not only aspects relevant to ABS. On activities for CGRFA 17 and 18 preparation, Mexico asked for reference to micro-organisms and invertebrates, and to “mainstreaming biodiversity and pollinators.”

The US and Europe supported establishing a cross-sectorial, multi-donor trust fund. Canada, with Europe, noted the recommendation does not exclude targeted country support. Europe further suggested that: FAO’s increased focus on biodiversity and GRFA be reflected in regular programme allocations; FAO should be the key recipient of funding for SDG Target 2.5; and projects should be developed on GRFA and climate change mitigation and adaptation, eligible for GCF funding. Uruguay stressed the need to ensure participation of developing countries’ representatives and experts in the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

On Friday, during the closing plenary, CGRFA Secretary Hoffmann noted agreement that the MYPOW table would be updated at subsequent sessions of the Commission.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission agrees that the Strategic Plan adopted at CGRFA 14 remains valid with updated major outputs and milestones. It requests the Secretariat to invite comments on the draft strategic plan, presented at this session, during the intersessional period, and to revise the document accordingly, also taking into account relevant international developments and the FAO’s Strategic Framework.

The Commission further:

- agrees on the draft resolution “CGRFA and its contribution towards the achievement of the SDGs”;
- requests FAO to establish a cross-sectorial multi-donor trust fund for MYPOW implementation while continuing bilateral projects for specific activities;
- decides to establish a new work stream on “digital sequence information on GRFA”; and
- welcomes the proposed measures to increase operational efficiency, noting with concern that while its mandate and activities under the MYPOW have broadened, funding has not increased proportionately.

Appendix 3 of the meeting’s report presents the major outputs and milestones of the MYPOW (2018-2027), which cover the Commission’s next five sessions.

THE COMMISSION’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SDGS:

On Thursday, Norway and Switzerland submitted to the plenary a draft resolution on achieving the SDGs and other agreements.

Brazil requested reflecting agreement to further discuss budgetary issues. Supported by Chile, she also proposed text on South-South and triangular cooperation. The US proposed inviting members to develop funding proposals consistent with their national priorities, when seeking funds from the GCF.

Cameroon proposed mentioning the private sector, in relation to pursuing extra-budgetary funds, and supporting capacity development activities in developing countries. The EU suggested highlighting GPAs as internationally agreed frameworks, recognizing the Commission as an important SDG partner, and encouraging donors to support GPA implementation as part of

their SDG strategies. Delegates agreed on the draft resolution and invited the FAO Director-General to bring it to the attention of the FAO Conference for approval at its forthcoming session.

On Friday, Canada requested referring to “the Commission’s” GPA, noting that there are also others.

Final Outcome: In the resolution on “The CGRFA and its contribution towards the achievement of the SDGs,” which is included in the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR Appendix 2), the Commission, *inter alia*:

- stresses the important linkages between biodiversity for food and agriculture and relevant global instruments, especially the 2030 Development Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;
- recognizes the importance of the GPAs as frameworks for national action;
- acknowledges the Commission’s work in developing targets and indicators on GRFA in the context of the implementation of the GPAs; and
- recognizes the Commission as an important partner towards the achievement of the SDGs, particularly Target 2.5, related to genetic diversity.

The Commission invites FAO members to, *inter alia*:

- include the implementation of GPAs in their national efforts to achieve SDG 2, particularly Target 2.5, as well as other relevant SDGs; and
- consider developing funding proposals on GRFA, consistent with their national priorities, as appropriate, when seeking funding from various sources, including the GCF, the Global Environment Facility, and Horizon 2020.

The Commission further requests FAO to, *inter alia*:

- continue to pursue extra-budgetary funds, and encourage donors to provide support as part of the global effort towards achieving the SDGs, particularly Target 2.5; and
- encourage synergies between relevant stakeholders whose work contributes to achieving the SDGs related to food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, and biodiversity.

COOPERATION

COOPERATION WITH ITPGR: On Thursday, delegates considered CGRFA-16/17/25. Kent Nnadozie, *Ad-Interim* Secretary, ITPGR, highlighted, among other issues, the proposed transfer of activities from the Commission to the Treaty, outlining the potential financial and administrative implications. GRULAC, Asia and Europe noted that, due to administrative and financial implications, the item should be kept under review. Canada stated that the Commission should continue to address PGR in the context of cross-cutting issues, and that FAO must continue to provide institutional support for transferred activities. The US preferred that the Secretariats of the Treaty and the Commission identify areas for close collaboration, rather than transferring issues.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission, *inter alia*:

- decides to keep the transfer of activities to the Treaty under review; and
- welcomes the proposal of a global workshop jointly organized by the Secretariats on the Commission and the Treaty, ABS for GRFA, to be held during the current or in the beginning of the next biennium, subject to the availability of the necessary extra-budgetary funds.

COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS: On Thursday, delegates considered CGRFA-16/17/24 Rev.1. GRULAC, with the CBD, highlighted the Cancun Declaration on mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for wellbeing.

The Global Crop Diversity Trust highlighted the Trust's endowment fund and invited additional investments. The CBD welcomed the FAO Platform on biodiversity and the agriculture sectors. Global Fund for Agricultural Research highlighted its "Global Foresight Hub," a multi-stakeholder platform for promoting equitable agri-food systems. Bioversity International noted that the Asia region has received the largest number of PGR transfers from the ITPGR's Multilateral System.

GRULAC, with Asia, underscored collaboration with different organizations providing input and feedback to the SOW-BFA Report. Canada suggested that future invitations for submissions be extended to relevant industry associations. Africa, opposed by the US, asked to include "development" in the document's title to highlight the need for farmer participation and on-the-ground impacts. New Zealand proposed mentioning impacts of cooperation at the country level in the meeting's report.

Final Outcome: In the report of the meeting (CGRFA-16/17/DR), the Commission requests the Secretariat to continue seeking inputs on prioritized themes of the regular sessions from international instruments, organizations and relevant stakeholders, and to make them available to the Commission.

OTHER MATTERS

Delegates agreed that CGRFA 17 will take place from 18-22 February 2019 in Rome, Italy, and elected William Wigmore (Cook Islands) as CGRFA 17 Chair. They also elected the following Vice-Chairs representing their region: Yusral Tahir (Indonesia) for Asia; Deidre Januarie (Namibia) for Africa; François Pythoud (Switzerland) for Europe; Tamara Villanueva (Chile) for GRULAC; Maeen Ali Ahmed Al-Jarmouzi (Yemen) for the Near East; and Christine Dawson (US) for North America.

Christine Dawson (US) was elected as Rapporteur.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Friday afternoon, Rapporteur Larissa Maria Lima Costa (Brazil) presented the meeting's draft report (CGRFA-16/17/DR). Delegates made numerous amendments to ensure that the report adequately reflects the outcome of the deliberations held during the week, including on digital sequence information on GRFA, ANGR and the MYPOW.

Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, Natural Resources, FAO, congratulated participants for "an ambitious session with ambitious plans," highlighting the draft report on SOW-AQGR, agreement to take forward the Commission's work on GRFA and ABS, and the draft resolutions on ANGR and the Commission's contribution to achieving the SDGs. She highlighted FAO's biodiversity platform for governments and stakeholders to mainstream biodiversity in the forests, fisheries and agriculture sectors as an example of FAO's new focus on biodiversity, noting that the Commission's work will be a pillar of that focus.

Incoming CGRFA Chair William Wigmore (Cook Islands), expressed appreciation for the Special Event on the Contribution of Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture to Resilience that had drawn attention to the devastating impacts of climate change and extreme weather events on livelihoods. He noted that previous breeding programmes on root and tuber crops had supported food security on many Pacific islands.

Asia stressed that agro-biodiversity will play a significant role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with regard to food security and food sovereignty. Africa stressed the need for support for implementation. Canada and the US, Europe and the Near East underscored the collaborative spirit that led to consensus on important issues. The Near East thanked FAO for putting biodiversity high on its agenda. GRULAC looked forward to a productive intersessional period.

CGRFA 16 Chair Cho Chang Yeon thanked all participants and gavelled the meeting to a close at 7:17 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF CGRFA 16

Agriculture and the environment must "talk to, rather than about, each other, and be more committed to solve problems together." FAO Deputy Director-General Daniel Gustafson's emphatic plea was echoed by numerous interventions made during the sixteenth session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA 16). This quotation eloquently captures the Commission's current situation: at a crossroads between its mandate to deliver high quality scientific expertise on genetic resources for food and agriculture (GRFA), and the need to reach out to other processes to raise awareness of the value of its work and the role that GRFA play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as helping to fulfill international commitments on climate change and other global issues.

CGRFA 16 also marked the end of the Commission's first ten-year cycle of global assessment (through the State of the World reports), policy development (via the Global Plans of Action) and implementation in each of the agricultural sub-sectors. Major reports have been completed on the state of the world's forest, plant and animal genetic resources. Discussions at CGRFA 16 placed a high priority on completing the Report on the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (SOW-BFA), which will synthesize previous work and promote the Commission's solid base of scientific expertise. Over the last 10 years, the political, technological and institutional environment in which the Commission works has become increasingly complex, creating new threats and opportunities for the Commission. CGRFA 16 encountered some stumbling blocks that illustrate how positioning the Commission to contribute to other processes is no easy task, as it can become caught up in external developments beyond its mandate.

This analysis discusses how CGRFA 16 navigated three types of change: the growing need to address humanitarian crises and build resilience to the impacts of climate change; technological developments; and institutional change.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

The role of GRFA for the livelihoods of farmers, livestock keepers and pastoralists is well known, and the Commission regularly draws attention to the need to enhance resilience through conservation, seed systems and breeding strategies that improve access to plant varieties and animal breeds that can adapt to the impacts of climate change. The importance of GRFA in providing emergency relief after human-made or natural disasters is less understood. Disasters interrupt food production systems by wiping out yields and seed stocks or killing animal herds. Once immediate needs for food, shelter and medical aid have been addressed, re-starting agricultural production is essential to prevent the long-term dislocation of people who have lost the basis of their livelihoods.

In the context of the current refugee crisis, delegates welcomed the Special Event on the Contribution of Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture to Resilience as an opportunity to discuss the importance of genetic resources in helping countries and communities develop more agricultural strategies to enhance resilience and improve their ability to recover from disasters. While delegates appreciated this much-needed push to raise awareness in the disaster risk reduction community, it also led members to realize that the Commission's ability to contribute to those efforts is limited. Alone, the Commission cannot be a strong driver of change, due to its limited mandate and funds. Recognizing the role of GRFA in this arena will require careful planning and integration of GRFA in adaptation strategies and resilience plans. Doing so may bring in allies who could enable the Commission to contribute to the work under other processes.

TECHNOLOGY

The development of new biotechnologies is increasingly outpacing the ability of multilateral processes to address their implications in a timely manner. Discussions that took place at the December 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference in Cancún, Mexico, on digital sequence information for genetic resources were a case in point. The rapid decoding of genomes makes it possible to transfer genetic information through digital means, detached from the physical source material. This led to questions in Cancún whether such transfers of genetic information in digital form should fall under the benefit-sharing obligations of the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol on ABS. Deliberations under the CBD and the Nagoya Protocol resulted in identical decisions: to establish an *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group for further work.

Similar discussions at CGRFA 16 showed that, in the context of GRFA, the issue may be broader. The ABS implications are rather self-evident, as a seasoned participant noted, stressing that this technological development renders physical access to the genetic resource unnecessary, and the sharing of the benefits rising from their utilization almost impossible to regulate. Others preferred addressing the issue in terms of a new biotechnology that could also support conservation and sustainable use. While digital sequence information could open ways to circumvent ABS obligations, it could also accelerate activities that are essential for conservation and sustainable use, including identification, characterization, exchange, and monitoring of GRFA. After extended debate on whether to address the issue exclusively as an ABS issue or as biotechnology as part of the respective work streams under the Commission's MYPOW, delegates decided to address both aspects under a new dedicated work stream. While some delegates welcomed the deal, as it provides an opportunity to address the issue in all its dimensions, others feared it would divert focus from real problems, taking away precious time to come to a much-needed conclusion.

Either way, the discussion showed that there is a danger, as in other processes, that work under the CGRFA could be "outrun" by technology development, which in this field moves at a much faster pace than the biennial meetings of the Commission. The situation could be further hampered by endless discussions on terminology or politically-loaded and entrenched positions around ABS. Some hiccups in this regard already surfaced at CGRFA 16 as ABS discussions on the scope and modalities of the Commission's work on the issue went late into the evenings, and arguments over terminology emerged at the closing plenary, when delegates finally settled for placing what one jokingly referred to as "scare quotes" around "digital sequence information."

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The UN General Assembly's adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015 created a framework for harmonizing the work of many actors in the galaxy of intergovernmental organizations. In response, many international bodies have begun to align their agendas with the SDGs, and develop their own programme frameworks to contribute to the monitoring and implementation of specific SDGs and targets. The timing of the biennial CGRFA sessions inadvertently made the Commission look like a laggard in doing so, since CGRFA 15 was not yet able to provide guidance on how to prepare for such an alignment when it met in January 2015, since the 2030 Agenda had not yet been adopted.

Delegates, therefore, warmly welcomed the last-minute resolution on the Commission's contributions to the SDGs, which should allow the Commission to "catch up," and engage with the ongoing process of monitoring and reporting. The resolution alerts members, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and other international players that the Commission can contribute to data gathering and monitoring progress on SDG Target 2.5 (conservation and sustainable use of GRFA and ABS related to GRFA). Moreover, it reasserts the Commission's role in achieving SDG 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).

In a similar way, members also sought to increase the Commission's profile as a contributor to mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Throughout the meeting, delegates began introducing language on the role of GRFA for climate change adaptation in several areas, including recommendations to develop integrated projects for GRFA under national adaptation and mitigation plans. Delegates saw this as an attempt to move the image of agriculture from being a perpetrator or "culprit" in climate change towards recognizing that it is part of the solution, as suggested during the opening session by René Castro Salazar, Assistant Director-General of FAO's new Department on Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water.

In the resolution on the contribution of the Commission to achieving the SDGs, members also expressed agreement to establish a multilateral trust fund to attract extra-budgetary support, and to emphasize adaptation to climate change as the conceptual underpinnings of the Commission's work. This could potentially enable the Commission to access funds from the Green Climate Fund, and connect itself to the constellation of donors supporting action on climate.

MOVING FORWARD

Considering the rapid institutional and technological changes affecting the Commission's work, its lengthy 10-year cycle of global assessments and policy development may actually hamper its ability to engage with new events. On the other hand, delegates value the opportunity to take a long-term perspective, which enables the Commission to provide an informed vision to a world that is facing rapid change. In the past, the Commission often took a targeted approach to engaging with other processes. CGRFA 16's discussions and outcomes have indicated that the Commission is shifting towards a more forward-looking approach, which positions itself as an active partner in the dynamic institutional landscape.

In engaging with this institutional landscape, members also realized that the Commission needs to overcome its "subsector silos" if it wants to make a real contribution—a challenge that delegates embraced, as they engaged in the exercise of drafting and adopting a "cross-sectorial" resolution on contributions to

the SDGs. The completion of the first 10-year cycle and the upcoming release of the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture are therefore a good opportunity for the Commission to "come out of the woods" and demonstrate the value of its work to other areas.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

40th Session of the IFAD Governing Council: The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Governing Council is IFAD's highest decision-making body. The 40th session of the Council will appoint IFAD's new President, who is expected to take office in April 2017. **dates:** 14-15 February 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** IFAD Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-54591 **fax:** +39-6-5043463 **email:** ifad@ifad.org **www:** <https://www.ifad.org/who/governance/tags/gc/2082356>

ITPGR WG to Enhance the Functioning of the MLS: The sixth meeting of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture's Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System (MLS) of Access and Benefit-Sharing will continue considering measures to increase user-based payments and contributions to the Benefit-sharing Fund, and additional measures to enhance the functioning of the MLS. **dates:** 13-17 March 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** ITPGR Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57053441 **fax:** +39-6-57053057 **email:** pgrfa-treaty@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/414992/>

IPBES 5: The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is the intergovernmental body that assesses the state of biodiversity and of the ecosystem services it provides to society, in response to requests from decision makers. IPBES 5 will address, among other issues: capacity building; indigenous and local knowledge systems; knowledge and data; and policy support tools and methodologies. It will also consider several assessments, including: conceptualization of multiple values of nature and its benefits; invasive alien species; and sustainable use of biodiversity. The fifth session of the IPBES Plenary will be preceded by a Stakeholder Day on 6 March 2017. **dates:** 7-10 March 2017 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** IPBES Secretariat **phone:** +49-228 815 0570 **email:** secretariat@ipbes.net **www:** <http://www.ipbes.net/plenary/ipbes-5>

Sixth meeting of the Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing: The Working Group is tasked, among other objectives, with elaborating a revised Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) and the development of a subscription system. The sixth meeting of the Working Group will be held in Rome, Italy. Regional consultations will take place on 13 March. **dates:** 13-17 March 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** ITPGR Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57053441 **fax:** +39-6-57053057 **email:** pgrfa-treaty@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/meetings/meetings-detail/en/c/414992/>

Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon: The Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon (GSOC17) is a scientific meeting, aiming to contribute to the efforts of ending hunger and malnutrition, climate change adaptation, reversing land degradation, and overall sustainable development while linking sustainable soil management and climate change mitigation and adaptation. **dates:** 21-23 March 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** FAO **email:** GSOC17@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/soil-organic-carbon-symposium>

BBNJ PrepCom 3: The third meeting of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly Resolution 69/292: Development of an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction will address marine genetic resources, area-based management tools, environmental impact assessments, capacity building, transfer of marine technology, and crosscutting issues. **dates:** 27 March - 7 April 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS) **phone:** +1-212-963-3962 **email:** doalos@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/depts/los/biodiversity/prepcom.htm>

Global Soil Week 2017: This event is organized by the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Potsdam, Germany. **dates:** 8-12 May 2017 (tentative) **location:** Berlin, Germany **contact:** IASS Potsdam **phone:** +49-331-288223-00 **fax:** +49-331-288223-10 **email:** info@iass-potsdam.de **www:** <http://www.globalsoilweek.org/>

International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV): The 34th Extraordinary Meeting of the UPOV Council will take place in April. **date:** 6 April 2017 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UPOV Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-338-91-11 **fax:** +41-22-733-03-36 **email:** upov.mail@upov.int **www:** http://www.upov.int/meetings/en/topic.jsp?group_id=271

FAO Council: The 156th session of the FAO Council will address programmes, finance and constitutional and legal matters, and discuss the calendar of FAO Governing Bodies and other main sessions for 2017-2018. **dates:** 24-28 April 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** FAO Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57051 **fax:** +39-6-570-53152 **email:** FAO-HQ@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/council/en/>

14th International Symposium on the Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms: The goal of this symposium, organized by the International Society for Biosafety Research, is to advance the standing of biosafety research around the world and shape the ways in which GM technology is applied and regulated. The 2017 theme is "Environmental risk assessment of GMOs: past, present and future." **dates:** 4-8 June 2017 **location:** Guadalajara, Mexico **contact:** Natalia Bogdanova **email:** bogdanova.natalia85@gmail.com **www:** <http://isbr.info/ISBGM014>

Ocean Conference: Our Oceans, Our Future: Partnering for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: This high-level UN Conference, co-hosted by the governments of Fiji and Sweden, will coincide with the World Oceans Day, and seeks to support the implementation of SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). **dates:** 5-9 June 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** Permanent Missions of Fiji and Sweden to the UN **phone:** +1-212-687-4130 (Fiji); +1-212-583-2500 (Sweden) **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/oceans/SDG14Conference>

Fifth Session of the Global Soil Partnership Assembly: The Global Soil Partnership (GSP) Plenary Assembly is the main, annual meeting of the Partnership charged with reviewing and prioritizing GSP actions, and facilitating a balanced regional decision-making process. The GSP brings together members of the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), the GSP Executive Secretariat, and representatives and FAO partners. **dates:** 20-22 June 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** FAO GSP Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57051 **email:** GSP-Secretariat@FAO.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/overview/plenary-assembly/en/>

FAO Conference: The 40th Session of the FAO Conference will review the state of food and agriculture, reports from regional conferences and reports from the technical committees. **dates:** 3-8 July 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** Louis Gagnon, FAO Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57051 **fax:** +39-6-570- 53152 **email:** FAO-HQ@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/conference/en/>

BBNJ PrepCom 4: The fourth meeting of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 (Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction) will address marine genetic resources, area-based management tools, environmental impact assessments, capacity building, transfer of marine technology, and crosscutting issues. **dates:** 10-21 July 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNDOALOS **phone:** +1-212-963-3962 **email:** doalos@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/depts/los/biodiversity/prepcom.htm>

Fourth International Marine Protected Areas Congress: This conference will gather participants from multidisciplinary backgrounds to discuss recent activities and trends in marine protected area management and science including, among other issues, management tools, conservation biology, ecology, fisheries, climate change, monitoring, enforcement, community development, communications, education and business administration. **dates:** 4-8 September 2017 **location:** La Serena, Chile **email:** impac4@mma.gob.cl **www:** <http://www.impac4.cl>

Committee on World Food Security: The 44nd session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) will be held in October. **dates:** 9-13 October (tentative) **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** CFS Secretariat **email:** cfs@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-home/cfs42/en/>

ITPGR GB 7: The seventh meeting of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture will address, among other items, measures to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, and farmers' rights. **dates:** October/November 2017 (tentative) **location:** to be confirmed **contact:** ITPGR Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-57053441 **fax:** +39-6-57053057 **email:** pgrfa-treaty@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/en/>

CBD COP 14, Cartagena Protocol COP-MOP 9, and Nagoya Protocol COP-MOP 3: The 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the third Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing will take place concurrently. **dates:** 2018, exact dates to be confirmed **location:** Egypt, exact location to be confirmed **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <http://www.cbd.int>

CGRFA 17: The 17th regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture will address a range of issues related to its MYPOW. **dates:** 18-22 February 2019 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** CGRFA Secretariat **phone:** +39-6-570-54981 **fax:** +39-6-570-53152 **email:** cgrfa@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/cgrfa-home/en/>

GLOSSARY

ABS	Access and benefit-sharing
ANGR	Animal genetic resources
AQGR	Aquatic genetic resources
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CGRFA	Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
DAD-IS	Domestic Animal Diversity Information Service
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGR	Forest genetic resources
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GPA	Global Plan of Action
GRFA	Genetic resources for food and agriculture
GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
IPC	International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
ITPGR	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
ITWG	Intergovernmental Technical Working Group
MYPOW	Multi-Year Programme of Work
NFPs	National focal points
PGR	Plant genetic resources
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOW	State of the World
SOW-BFA	Report on the State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture
TTLE-ABS	Team of Technical and Legal Experts on ABS
WIEWS	World Information and Early Warning System on PGR