MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

Elena Espinosa, Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, opened the Ministerial Segment, and emphasized the Treaty’s importance for the conservation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), food security, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Jacques Diouf, FAO Director-General, called upon participants to adopt a draft ministerial declaration and reflect the Treaty’s objectives in national programmes and legislation, and development strategies. Upon a motion by Minister Espinosa, participants adopted the declaration by acclamation.

Several participants acknowledged the interconnectedness of global food security, farmers’ rights, poverty alleviation, the MDGs and benefit-sharing. Developing country representatives called for international support for traditional farming methods, including the development of regional networks to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills, and emphasized the need for financial and technical transfers to build the capacity of their PGRFA-related national institutions. One speaker called attention to the special contribution of women farmers. Developed country representatives underscored the importance of financial support for the Treaty’s implementation, with Bernd Hermelingmeier, Germany’s Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, pledging 1.5 million euros to the Global Crop Diversity Trust over five years. Other speakers also highlighted the role of the private sector in the funding strategy. Ministers and other participants were united in calling for the immediate operationalization of the Treaty.

WORKING GROUP II

FINANCIAL RULES: The Secretariat reported on progress achieved on Monday evening by the financial rules contact group, highlighting disagreement as to whether voluntary contributions from parties should be based on an indicative scale. Angola for AFRICA, Venezuela for GRULAC, SWITZERLAND, NORWAY, INDIA, CHAD and COTE D’IVOIRE supported the indicative scale of voluntary contributions, with ARGENTINA expressing concern about setting a precedent of strictly voluntary contributions. CANADA, JAPAN and Australia, on behalf of the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, preferred strictly voluntary contributions, with JAPAN cautioning that a scale of voluntary contributions may deter future ratifications of the Treaty. The US noted that the suggested cap of the proposed scale of contributions did not conform to the cap adopted by the UN System. Austria, on behalf of the EU, proposed deferring the issue to informal consultations.

Delegates then decided to defer discussion on controversial political issues, reconvene the contact group to finalize technical issues, and create an open-ended budget committee to meet on Tuesday evening.

FUNDING STRATEGY: The Secretariat introduced the draft funding strategy (IT/GB-1/06/5, IT/GB-1/06/INF.8 and Add.1, INF.9 and 11). The EU proposed restructuring the draft resolution to highlight action-oriented text, and proposed establishing an ad hoc advisory committee to consider annexes. The GENTRAN-UK group suggested adopting the draft funding strategy resolution and BRAZIL also called for adoption of annex I, with the possibility of intersessional technical work on some of the other proposed annexes. The preamble of the draft resolution, delegates discussed whether the Global Crop Diversity Trust is an “essential element” or an “important supporting component” of the funding strategy, agreeing on the former. Several developing country delegates supported language on prioritizing implementation in developing countries and taking into account the Global Plan of Action when establishing further priorities for the funding strategy. The EU and Australia reserved their right to propose amendments to this text.

On the operative text, AUSTRALIA, the EU and CANADA, opposed by many developing countries, proposed deleting references to the Secretariat “ensuring” developed country parties’ provision of adequate resources. Following JAPAN’s suggestion, delegates agreed that the Secretariat should “facilitate” such provision of resources. The EU stressed that taking steps within the governing bodies of relevant international mechanisms, funds and bodies, to ensure due attention to allocation of resources for Treaty implementation, is the task of parties and not the Secretariat. GRULAC proposed deleting a reference to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), noting the CBD’s own funding problems. AUSTRALIA supported language on “other relevant mechanisms, funds and bodies.”

On providing information to the Secretariat regarding the provision of bilateral funding from sources within their country, GRULAC, supported by SUDAN, argued that only...
developed countries should provide information. AUSTRALIA
and CANADA objected, preferring a uniform requirement
for all countries. Opposed by AUSTRALIA and CANADA,
GRULAC called for eliminating the entire paragraph, which
remained bracketed. Delegates then discussed, without reaching
agreement, language on promoting voluntary contributions from
sources within countries to promote ITPGR operations and
objectives, with GRULAC requesting an explicit reference to
supporting the implementation of the funding strategy.

On inviting the governing bodies of relevant international
bodies to support the Treaty’s implementation, AUSTRALIA,
supported by the EU and opposed by BRAZIL and EGYPT,
proposed removing a reference to “proprietary and agreed
resources.” AUSTRALIA, supported by ANGOLA, CHAD and
INDIA, said all countries, rather than only developing countries,
should report on capacity-building programmes. Opposed by
CANADA, EGYPT and CHAD, GRULAC proposed deleting
the entire paragraph, which was eventually retained. On the
establishment of a trust account, the EU, opposed by CANADA
and AUSTRALIA, proposed the establishment of an ad hoc
permanent technical committee to formulate its terms of
reference.

WG-II agreed on text on: providing information to the
Secretariat on bilateral assistance provided; requesting the Global
Crop Diversity Trust to cooperate with the Governing Body on
the basis of a relationship agreement, including on the Governing
Body’s authority to provide overall policy guidance to the Trust;
requesting the Consultative Group for International Agricultural
Research to report to the Governing Body on activities in support
of implementing the funding strategy; requesting the Global
Environment Facility, the World Bank and regional banks to
support the sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity; and
inviting both value-added and food processing industries to make
voluntary contributions.

In the evening, WG-II addressed an annex containing a
draft funding strategy. Delegates agreed that the strategy aims
to “develop ways and means by which adequate resources are
available.” Discussions continued into the night.

MTA CONTACT GROUP

Delegates debated, and eventually agreed, to base negotiations
on the draft standard MTA forwarded by the second meeting of
the intersessional MTA Contact Group (IT/GB-1/06/6), using
when necessary elements of the report of the MTA Contact
Group Chair (IT/GB-1/06/INF.15).

Preamble: The SOUTHWEST PACIFIC and NORTH
AMERICA opposed text stating that nothing in the MTA shall
be interpreted as implying a change in ITPGR parties’ rights
and obligations, and instead proposed drafting a Governing Body
resolution on the relationship between ITPGR parties and MTA
parties.

Rights and obligations of the recipient: AFRICA and the NEAR EAST, opposed by the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC and NORTH AMERICA, requested retaining text on reporting intellectual property rights obtained by the recipient to the third party beneficiary. On PGRFA under development, most regions supported, but the NEAR EAST opposed, text from the Drafting Group Chair’s report on the recipient’s obligations when transferring PGRFA under development to another person or entity.

On payments applying to products not available without
restriction, delegates agreed to delete a reference stating that,
in the case of licensing or leasing, benefit-sharing obligations
shall also apply to licensees or lessees of the recipient. On
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GRULAC proposed text recognizing intellectual property rights obtained by the recipient to the third party beneficiary. On PGRFA under development, most regions supported, but the NEAR EAST opposed, text from the Drafting Group Chair’s report on the recipient’s obligations when transferring PGRFA under development to another person or entity.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Following Monday’s relaxed start, delegates were in high
gear on Tuesday maneuvering through complicated negotiations.
Some grumbled about the exclusive membership of the MTA
corridor group, but those inside were mostly happy with the
steady progress being made. Even though negotiations kept
tripping over issues relating to “big” Parties (to the Treaty
and “small” parties (to the MTA), most showed determination
to resolve outstanding issues in a late-night session. The same
sentiment of slow but steady progress dominated WG-II, where
delegates addressed the stumbling blocks of the funding strategy
in an inexorable spirit of cooperation.