

Summary of the Tenth Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: 20-24 November 2023

Gathering policy-makers, farmers, and plant breeders, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA or Treaty) aims to conserve crop diversity and share its benefits for human and planetary well-being. The tenth session of its Governing Body (GB 10) was held under the theme “From seeds to innovative solutions, safeguarding our future: contributing to the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework for sustainable food systems.” This theme highlighted the importance of crop diversity for food security, environmental sustainability, and socio-economic well-being, in the face of global challenges including climate change. It underscored farmers’ contributions to agricultural biodiversity, and drew attention to the interlinkages between the Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as GB 10 convened less than a year after the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) by the CBD Conference of the Parties (COP) in December 2022.

The need to ensure close collaboration with the CBD was one of the key messages of the session, particularly in the context of the negotiations to enhance the functioning of the Treaty’s Multilateral System (MLS) of access and benefit-sharing (ABS), given the CBD COP 15 decision to establish a multilateral mechanism on benefit-sharing from the use of digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources. Four Working Group meetings are planned for the next biennium to allow for progress on the negotiations to enhance the MLS, focusing on three identified “hotspots”: DSI/genetic sequence data (GSD); expansion of the list of crops in Annex I (crops covered under the MLS); and payment structure and rates.

Following intense debates on the role of the Treaty in promoting implementation of farmers’ rights, reminiscent of earlier sessions, GB 10 reconvened the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on farmers’ rights, tasked with advancing an assessment of implementation.

Overall, the session served as a reminder that the Treaty is at the heart of the international community’s collective responsibility to conserve agricultural biodiversity and share its benefits fairly and equitably. This session further set the stage for a busy intersessional period before the next GB session needs to find the political will to finalize the task of enhancing the MLS with the aim of boosting the sharing of benefits from the use of plant genetic resources for food

and agriculture (PGRFA) and, ultimately, to reposition the Treaty in an evolving global policy landscape.

GB 10 was held from 20-24 November 2023, at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) in Rome, Italy. Approximately 400 participants gathered, representing governments, intergovernmental organizations, international agricultural research centers, farmers’ organizations, civil society, and the private sector.

A Brief History of the Treaty

Concluded under the auspices of the FAO, the Treaty is a legally-binding instrument that targets the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out

In this Issue

A Brief History of the Treaty	1
GB 10 Report	3
Organizational Matters	3
Report of the Chairperson	3
Report of the Secretary	3
Multilateral System	4
Funding Strategy	5
Global Information System	5
Conservation and Sustainable Use of PGRFA	6
Farmers’ Rights	6
Compliance	6
FAO Contribution	7
Cooperation	7
Multi-Year Programme of Work	8
Work Programme and Budget	9
Proposal for the Renewal and Term of Office the Secretary	9
Adoption of the Report and Closing Plenary	10
A Brief Analysis of GB 10	10
Upcoming Meetings	11
Glossary	12

of their use, in harmony with the CBD, for sustainable agriculture and food security. It establishes an MLS for facilitated access to a specified list of PGRFA including 35 crop genera and 29 forage species (Annex I), and institutionalizes monetary and non-monetary benefit-sharing from the utilization of these resources in the areas of commercialization, information exchange, technology transfer, and capacity building.

The Treaty was adopted on 3 November 2001 by the FAO Conference, following seven years of negotiations. It entered into force on 29 June 2004, and currently has 151 parties.

Key Turning Points

GB 1: The first session of the Treaty's GB (June 2006, Madrid, Spain) adopted the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) and the Funding Strategy. The SMTA includes provisions on a benefit-sharing scheme, providing two options. First, the recipient can choose to pay 0.77% of gross sales from commercialization of new products incorporating material accessed from the MLS, if its availability to others for further research and breeding is restricted. Alternatively, the recipient can choose to pay 0.5% of gross sales on all PGRFA products of the species they accessed from the MLS, regardless of whether the products incorporate the material accessed and regardless of whether the new products are available without restriction. The GB further adopted:

- its rules of procedure, including decision making by consensus;
- financial rules with bracketed options on an indicative scale of voluntary contributions or voluntary contributions in general;
- a resolution establishing a Compliance Committee;
- the relationship agreement with the Global Crop Diversity Trust; and
- a model agreement with CGIAR and other international institutions.

GB 2: The second session of the GB (October-November 2007, Rome, Italy) addressed the implementation of the Funding Strategy, the material transfer agreement for non-Annex I crops, and sustainable use of PGRFA. The meeting also adopted a resolution on farmers' rights, as well as a joint statement of intent for cooperation with the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA).

GB 5: The fifth session of the GB (September 2013, Muscat, Oman) established the *Ad hoc* Open-ended Working Group to Enhance the Functioning of the MLS, with the mandate to develop measures to increase user-based payments and contributions to the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF), as a priority, as well as additional measures to enhance the functioning of the MLS. GB 5 also adopted a resolution on the funding strategy for the BSF containing a list of innovative approaches to increase voluntary contributions and a work programme on sustainable use.

The Working Group met four times during the intersessional period (May 2014, December 2014, June 2015, and October 2015).

GB 6: The sixth session of the GB (October 2015, Rome, Italy) extended the mandate of the Working Group on the MLS, and requested that it, among other issues:

- elaborate a full draft revised SMTA;
- elaborate options for adapting coverage of the MLS, based on different scenarios and income projections; and
- consider issues regarding genetic information associated with material accessed from the MLS.

The meeting adopted a work programme for the Global Information System, and resolutions on a series of substantive,

cooperation-related, and administrative items, with a focus on addressing the shortfall in the BSF and on strengthening the implementation of Treaty provisions regarding conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA on-farm, through the work programme on sustainable use and farmers' rights.

The Working Group met three times during the intersessional period (July 2016, March 2017, and September 2017).

GB 7: The seventh session of the GB (October-November 2017, Kigali, Rwanda) extended the mandate of the Working Group on the MLS, requesting it to:

- continue revision of the SMTA;
- develop a proposal for a growth plan to attain the enhanced MLS; and
- elaborate criteria and options for possible adaptation of the coverage of the MLS.

GB 7 further established an *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights; reconvened the *Ad Hoc* Advisory Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization to develop the updated Funding Strategy; and decided to put DSI on the GB 8 agenda.

Working Group on the MLS: At its eighth meeting (October 2018), the Working Group continued negotiations on specific clauses of the SMTA. Its ninth meeting (June 2019) reached tentative compromise to amend Annex I of the Treaty (list of crops in the MLS), to include all PGRFA under the management and control of parties and in the public domain, in *ex situ* conditions, while allowing for reasoned national exemptions regarding a limited number of native species. The Working Group also agreed on a package of measures, allowing for simultaneous adoption of the revised SMTA and the amendment of Annex I. Negotiations continued on the draft revised SMTA. Consensus was reached on several provisions, with DSI/GSD and rates for benefit-sharing payments remaining as the main outstanding issues, and the meeting was suspended to allow for additional time to finalize negotiations.

However, at the resumed ninth meeting (October 2019), the Working Group was unable to bridge positions between developed and developing countries. Working Group Co-Chairs Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands) and Javad Mozafari (Iran) issued a compromise proposal on a package of elements, addressing benefit-sharing payment rates, benefit-sharing from DSI/GSD, and the review of the enhanced MLS, but consensus was elusive. Deep principled divergences remained, in particular regarding benefit-sharing payments from the use of DSI/GSD.

Recent Meetings

GB 8: At its eighth session (November 2019, Rome, Italy), the GB did not reach agreement on the package of measures to enhance the functioning of the MLS, after six years of negotiations, nor on continuing intersessional work. GB 8 adopted a series of other resolutions, including on farmers' rights, conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, and the Funding Strategy. Still, as many noted with frustration, failure to enhance the MLS indicated it was time for sober contemplation on the future of the Treaty.

GB 9: At its ninth session (September 2022, New Delhi, India), the GB re-established the Working Group on enhancing the functioning of the MLS, in a decision hailed as the main achievement of the meeting. GB 9 also addressed issues related to cooperation with the CBD, including on DSI/GSD, and finalized a set of options for encouraging, guiding, and promoting the realization of farmers' rights.

GB 10 Report

The meeting opened on [Monday, 20 November 2023](#), featuring statements from regions, parties, and observers. David Cooper, CBD Acting Executive Secretary, highlighted the common objectives of the CBD and the Treaty, and drew attention to the GBF's ambitious goals, and its human rights-based approach. Underlining the related discussions in the CBD, World Health Organization, and the new Agreement on marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, Dan Leskien, Acting Secretary of the CGRFA, emphasized the leading position of the Treaty's MLS as a "role model, a best seller in international policy." ITPGRFA Secretary Kent Nnadozie stressed the importance of adhering to the Treaty's core principles of cooperation and shared responsibility, and leveraging the momentum of the GBF to advance discussions during the week. Regional statements highlighted the Treaty's role in implementing the GBF and in addressing global challenges, and outlined their priorities for the meeting.

A special event titled "From Seeds to Innovative Solutions, Safeguarding our Future" brought together key stakeholders for agricultural biodiversity management. Facilitated by BBC journalist Dan Saladino, author of "Eating to Extinction," the event featured a keynote address by David Cooper on the linkages and synergies between the Treaty and the GBF, followed by an interactive discussion.

Organizational Matters

On [Monday](#), the GB plenary adopted the agenda and timetable ([IT/GB-10/23/1 Rev.1](#) and [1.2 Rev.2](#)); approved the list of observers ([IT/GB-10/23/1.3](#)); and welcomed ratification by Nigeria and Somalia. They accepted the nomination of Milena Savic Ivanov (Serbia) as rapporteur; and established a Credentials Committee and a Budget Committee.

On Friday, the plenary heard a report from Credentials Committee Chair Asta Tamang (Bhutan). Regions nominated, and plenary elected, the following members of the GB 11 Bureau: John Wasswa Mulumba (Uganda), for Africa; Sabnam Shivakoti Aryal (Nepal) for Asia; Mariana Marshall Parra (Brazil) for the Latin American and the Caribbean Group (GRULAC); Neveen Abd El Fattah Hassan (Egypt) for Near East; Katlyn Scholl (US) for North America; and Alison Curran (Australia) for Southwest Pacific. Alwin Kopše (Switzerland), was elected as GB 11 Chair, nominated by the European Regional Group (ERG).

Report of the Chairperson

On [Monday](#), the plenary took note of the Chairperson's report ([IT/GB-10/23/5](#)) outlining intersessional work of the Bureau, preparations for GB 10, and updates on partnerships, including support for the relocation of a germplasm collection from eastern Ukraine. Delegates commended the work and leadership of Chair Yasmína El-Bahloul (Morocco), despite challenging circumstances over the past four years.

Report of the Secretary

On [Monday](#), Secretary Nnadozie presented his report ([IT/GB-10/23/6 Rev.1](#)), noting intense intersessional activity and highlighting efforts to increase participation to achieve the goal of transforming the Treaty into a universal agreement. In light of the recent adoption of the GBF, he proposed deferring finalization of the draft capacity development strategy ([IT/GB-10/23/6.1](#)) to GB 11 to ensure coordination with the CBD long-term strategic framework for capacity building and development. Delegates expressed

appreciation for the intersessional work. The ERG congratulated Nigeria and Somalia for joining the Treaty, noting that the number of parties will soon reach 152.

Capacity Development Strategy: On [Monday](#), the Secretariat presented the draft capacity development strategy ([IT/GB-10/23/6.1](#)), the report on implementation of the Communication Strategy ([IT/GB-10/23/6/Inf.1](#)), and the results of the survey on capacity development initiatives, gaps, and needs ([IT/GB-10/23/6.1/Inf.2](#)). Discussions highlighted the need for complementarity with the CBD long-term strategic framework for capacity building and development.

Final Outcome: In the resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 6.1/L2), the GB requests the Secretariat to:

- finalize the draft capacity development strategy to promote coherence in planning and delivering capacity development and take into account other instruments and bodies, including the GBF and the CBD long-term strategic framework for capacity building and development, and the capacity gaps and needs identified in the third report on the State of the World's PGRFA; and
- develop the draft action plan for implementation of the strategy under the guidance of the Bureau and in consultation with parties.

From Seeds to Innovative Solutions, Safeguarding our Future: On [Monday](#), the Secretariat introduced the document on the role of PGRFA within the GBF ([IT/GB-10/23/7](#)). Regions broadly supported the draft resolution and some proposed specific amendments.

Discussions included calls for guidance on strategies for encouraging non-parties to join the Treaty, and calls for exploring links between the GBF and the Treaty, and identifying relevant GBF targets.

On [Thursday](#), delegates addressed a draft resolution on the role of PGRFA within the GBF (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 7/L1). Debate focused on a paragraph recognizing that GBF implementation should follow a human rights-based approach, and that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants is the most relevant human rights instrument for the Treaty.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 7/L2), the GB:

- welcomes the GBF and highlights its full relevance to PGRFA;
- acknowledges the achievement of the GBF would contribute to the implementation of the Treaty;
- emphasizes that Treaty implementation would make a significant contribution to achieving the GBF, particularly in relation to sustainable food systems; and
- recognizes that as a result of the GBF, biodiversity is receiving higher attention on the policy agenda, at the national and international levels, which presents an opportunity to strengthen Treaty implementation.

The GB invites parties to encourage effective liaison between the respective national focal points (NFPs) of the CBD and the Treaty in national processes related to GBF implementation; and mainstream the implementation of the Treaty within National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and other relevant policies, plans, and programmes to support GBF implementation, and share lessons learned.

The GB requests the Secretariat, among others, to:

- bring together parties and Treaty-enabling partners to share success stories, knowledge gained, and lessons learned in this area, and to liaise with the CGRFA Ad Hoc Expert Team on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture;
- continue engaging and providing inputs to relevant CBD processes related to the GBF and to report back to the GB;
- continue to report to the GB on cooperation with other relevant international bodies and organizations, including with the Human Rights Council and other international human rights bodies, and related collaborative activities; and
- strengthen cooperation in the implementation of goals and targets related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

Noting that CBD COP 16 will finalize a number of elements of the GBF, including on the monitoring framework, resource mobilization, national planning processes and a multilateral mechanism for benefit-sharing from the use of DSI, the GB decides to add “GBF implementation and follow-up actions” as a milestone for the GB 11 in the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW).

Multilateral System

Implementation and Operations: On [Monday](#), the Secretariat introduced documents on MLS implementation ([IT/GB-10/23/9.1](#) and [Add.1](#), and [9.1.2](#)), providing information on material available, an analysis of germplasm transfers within the MLS, information on some of the recent training and capacity-building activities undertaken by the Secretariat, and a draft resolution. Discussions focused on gaps in the accessions available in the MLS and on the low volume of benefit-sharing. On [Thursday](#), plenary approved the resolution.

Final Outcome: The resolution on **implementation and operations of the MLS** (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 9.1/L2) includes sections on:

- availability and transfer of material in the MLS;
- operations of the MLS;
- practice of the CGIAR Centres on the management of intellectual assets related to PGRFA;
- operation of the Third Party Beneficiary; and
- reviews and assessments under the MLS, and of the implementation and operation of the SMTA.

The GB appeals to parties, and natural and legal persons to make their PGRFA available in the MLS, together with the relevant non-confidential characterization and evaluation data; and appeals to donors to support national gene banks in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The GB requests the Secretariat to support parties in the documentation and exchange of national experiences on implementation of the MLS, to publish them on the Treaty’s website; and to continue to work with the Article 15 institutions to build capacity among a broader range of providers, including natural and legal persons, to implement the MLS and to report on use of the SMTA.

The GB decides to maintain the Third Party Beneficiary Operational Reserve for the 2024-2025 biennium at the current level of USD 283,280 and to review the same at GB 11; and authorizes the Secretariat to draw on the Reserve as may be needed for implementation of the functions of the Third Party Beneficiary.

The GB requests the Secretariat to continue capacity-development activities and awareness-raising efforts on the voluntary inclusion of PGRFA in the MLS, with the participation of

NFPs and relevant stakeholders; and to undertake further research and consultations on possible measures to encourage inclusion of their PGRFA in the MLS.

In the resolution on the **emergency reserve** (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 9.1.3/L2), the GB welcomes the continued availability and operation of the Emergency Reserve for Germplasm Collections at Risk to facilitate the rapid response to imminent threats to unique germplasm collections that fall under the Treaty framework and requests the Secretariat to communicate more widely the availability of the reserve and the related eligibility criteria more widely.

Enhancement of the MLS: The GB plenary addressed the process to enhance the functioning of the MLS on [Monday](#) and [Tuesday](#). Informal consultations were held throughout the week. Michael Ryan (Australia), Co-Chair of the Working Group to enhance the MLS, introduced the Co-Chairs’ checkpoint report ([IT/GB-10/23/9.2](#)), suggesting: building on the draft package of measures developed in June 2019; prioritizing the three “hotspots” on DSI/GSD, amendment of Annex I, and payment structure/rates; and a timeline leading to GB 11. SWITZERLAND reaffirmed support for their proposal to amend Annex I to cover all PGRFA ([IT/GB-10/23/8](#)) and delegates agreed to address it jointly with the enhancement of the MLS and to reconsider it at GB 11.

Deliberations focused, among others, on the process for the upcoming negotiations and interlinkages with CBD COP Decision 15/9, which established a multilateral mechanism for benefit-sharing from the use of DSI on genetic resources. Many expressed support for: the preliminary timeline for negotiations; use of the June 2019 package; and focus on the three “hotspots.” GRULAC requested an information document compiling the 2019 draft package and the documents that led to it. Some regions also reiterated their positions on substantive issues.

NORTH AMERICA stressed the need for a DSI/GSD definition, and said that monetary benefit-sharing under the Treaty relates to exchange of material only, while DSI/GSD should be made available as part of non-monetary benefit-sharing. He suggested waiting for the outcome of the CBD process on DSI, adding that the Working Group should halt the process if no consensus is reached at its 12th meeting. CANADA and the EU supported expanding use of MLS material to non-food and feed uses. Developing country regions highlighted needs for increasing income to the BSF.

On [Thursday](#), plenary heard a report from informal consultations and addressed elements for a draft resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 9.2/CRP1). Delegates agreed to “take note of” CBD Decision 15/9 on DSI on Genetic Resources, and discussed the modalities for the four meetings of the Working Group to be held during the next biennium, in addition to informal consultations.

Final Outcome: In the resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 9.2/L2), the GB endorses the suggestion of the Working Group to use the June 2019 draft package as a starting point for its further work; requests the Co-Chairs to give early attention to the three identified “hotspots”: DSI/GSD, expansion of Annex I, and payment structure and rates; and invites the Co-Chairs to publish an updated indicative timeline and a package of relevant information in relation to the process. It takes note of CBD COP Decision 15/9 and urges the Working Group to take this decision and related developments into account when addressing the issue of DSI/GSD.

Stressing the importance of an open and inclusive process, the GB requests the Co-Chairs to continue to organize stakeholder and regional consultations and invites them to seek written inputs

from all relevant stakeholders. It notes that four formal in-person meetings of the Working Group will be required to make sufficient progress, and invites the Co-Chairs to organize additional informal consultations. It finally invites parties to fully commit to the negotiations and to provide support and financial resources, as necessary.

Funding Strategy

On [Tuesday](#), the Secretariat presented the report of the Standing Committee on the Funding Strategy and Resource Mobilization ([IT/GB-10/23/10](#)) and the BSF report ([IT/GB-10/23/10/Inf.1](#)), noting underrepresentation by some regions in the fifth project cycle (BSF-5). Committee Co-Chair Katlyn Scholl (US) recommended adjusting the concluding date of the Operational Plan from 2025 to 2027 to account for the impact of COVID-19, build on the recent adoption of the GBF, and support the finalization of the enhancement of the MLS.

During their deliberations, delegates welcomed work in implementing the Food Processing Industry Engagement Strategy but cautioned against putting pressure on the food processing sector. Some delegates noted that only 1% of the contributions to the BSF are user-based, while others opposed setting an overall target for funds to come through the BSF.

On [Thursday](#), plenary addressed a draft resolution on the implementation of the Funding Strategy. They agreed that the FAO's support to the Treaty should focus on the nexus between biodiversity and climate change.

Final Outcome: The final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 10/L2) is split into four parts. On the funding strategy, the GB:

- decides to revise the timeline of the Funding Strategy from 2020-2025 to 2020-2027, to enable the Treaty to build upon the opportunities and momentum arising from the recent adoption of the GBF, and to enable the Funding Committee to support the finalization of the process for the enhancement of the MLS in the next biennium;
- invites FAO to prioritize the delivery of programmes and projects that support implementation of the Treaty; and
- notes with concern the absence or low participation of some regions in the meetings of the Funding Committee, and urges regional groups and parties to consider both expertise and availability in nominating members to the Committee.

On resource mobilization, the GB:

- encourages parties to mobilize resources from various sources to meet the targets of the Funding Strategy;
- welcomes the progress made in implementing the approved Food Processing Industry Engagement Strategy, and requests the Committee to continue to provide regular updates to the GB on its implementation;
- thanks Germany, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the US for their financial contributions during the period 2022-2023 to the Fund for Agreed Purposes of the Treaty;
- thanks the EU, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland for their financial contributions in support of BSF-5; and
- thanks the French Inter-professional Organisation for Seeds and Plants and the Federation of Seed Industry of India for their generous contributions to the BSF.

On BSF operations, the GB:

- welcomes the report on the BSF for the 2022-2023 period submitted to the GB;

- stresses the importance of communicating the results of ongoing projects under the fourth cycle and the expected results of BSF-5 within the framework of the broader communication strategy of the Treaty; and
- requests the Secretariat to continue to hold regional on-line briefings to update parties and stakeholders on progress and relevant developments, as well as to receive feedback.

On monitoring, learning, and review, the GB:

- invites parties and others to provide information to the Secretariat to assist regular reviews of the Funding Strategy;
- calls upon parties to share information about the results of the further integration of PGRFA in national budgets and priorities with the Secretariat, for the development of strategic tools that NFPs and others can use to leverage new resources;
- invites relevant international mechanisms, funds and bodies, stakeholder groups, and other international organizations to provide information to the Secretariat that will enable the Funding Committee to better leverage funding from all sources for Treaty implementation and the delivery of non-monetary benefit-sharing; and
- stresses the importance of finalizing and testing the methodology for measuring non-monetary benefit-sharing, and requests the Funding Committee to give attention to this matter early in the biennium 2024-2025.

Global Information System

On [Tuesday](#), the Secretariat introduced the report on implementation of the Global Information System (GLIS) ([IT/GB-10/23/11](#)), including a draft resolution and updates on the GLIS portal, assistance to users, the improvement of documentation of PGRFA, and major partnerships.

Delegates expressed support for reconvening the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), and discussions focused on the need for expansion and streamlining GLIS databases and to financially support the development of national inventories on crop wild relatives.

On [Thursday](#), plenary considered the resolution, with delegates debating funding responsibilities and restrictions. Compromises were reached and the draft resolution was approved as amended.

Final Outcome: In the resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item11/L2), the GB decides to reconvene the SAC with the same terms of reference (ToR) as the previous biennium, and requests it to continue considering scientific and technical issues related to the conservation and use of PGRFA with relevance to DSI/GSD, and the implications of the relevant outcomes of CBD COP 15.

The GB further requests the Secretariat to:

- promote capacity building for the improvement of national databases, the access and use of information in the GLIS portal, and the voluntary use of digital object identifiers (DOIs);
- support parties in the development of national inventories on crop wild relatives through extra-budgetary resources;
- provide a report to the SAC-GLIS and GB 11 on relevant updates on documentation and information exchange of PGRFA in the context of the GBF;
- advance the exchange of relevant information and links with the CBD Clearing House Mechanism; and
- follow up on implementation of the recommendations of the SAC and to provide a summary report to GB 11.

Conservation and Sustainable Use of PGRFA

On [Tuesday](#), the Secretariat introduced the documents ([IT/GB-10/23/12](#), [12.1](#), and [12.2](#)), including the background study on bottlenecks and challenges to the implementation of Treaty Articles 5 and 6 ([IT/GB-10/23/12/Inf.1](#)). Delegates discussed the strategies identified to address the implementation bottlenecks, including through an inclusive process to develop voluntary guidelines, and a mechanism to support of implementation.

On [Thursday](#), plenary considered the resolution, and approved it with minor amendments, notably asking a Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use, with agreed ToR in the resolution, to begin drafting voluntary guidelines on possible approaches to address the bottlenecks, in consultation with parties.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 12/L2), among others, the GB agrees to:

- request the Secretariat to continue to analyze and monitor the identified gaps and needs on implementation of Articles 5 and 6 on conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA;
- reconvene the Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use with ToR annexed to the resolution—setting out that the Committee will, among other things: develop a mechanism to identify the status of parties’ Articles 5 and 6 implementation, supporting those needing assistance; and provide inputs and begin drafting voluntary guidelines on possible approaches to address the bottlenecks identified in the background study on bottlenecks and challenges to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the Treaty, in consultation with parties; and
- call on parties and other donors to provide additional financial resources for the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the Treaty.

The resolution includes annexes on the ToR for the continuing Technical Committee on Conservation and Sustainable Use and summary information on future strategies to address the bottlenecks to the implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the Treaty.

Farmers’ Rights

On [Tuesday](#), the Secretariat introduced the Report on the Implementation of Farmers’ Rights ([IT/GB-10/23/13](#)). Debates centered on the establishment of an expert group (and its ToR) to prepare an assessment of the state of implementation of Article 9 on farmers’ rights. Delegates also applauded India for organizing the Global Symposium on Farmers’ Rights in New Delhi in September 2023.

On [Wednesday](#), a contact group, co-chaired by India and Norway, convened to negotiate a conference room paper containing a draft resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 13/CRP1). Debate focused on the scope of, and ToR for, a potential intersessional Working Group, or expert group.

On Friday, plenary addressed an amended draft resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 13/CRP2). Delegates agreed to a paragraph that reaffirms the important role of female farmers in food security. On a paragraph that takes note of the outlines of the assessment of the state of implementation of Article 9 on farmers’ rights, NIGER, opposed by NORTH AMERICA, proposed requesting that the assessment set out the measures limiting realization of farmers’ rights. Following discussions, plenary agreed to “take note of” the request and to invite suggestions by parties and interested stakeholders, including on how measures limiting the realization of farmers’ rights could be included in the assessment.

A proposal by NORTH AMERICA to state that Article 9.3 allows for parties to legislate the scope of farmers’ seed rights was met with opposition by several countries and was withdrawn following discussions. Plenary also agreed to reconvene the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Farmers’ Rights, and agreed on its ToR. The draft resolution was agreed as amended.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 13/L2), the GB agrees, among other things, to:

- welcome the publication of Options for Encouraging, Guiding and Promoting the Realization of Farmers’ Rights as set out in Article 9 of the Treaty, and encourage parties and other stakeholders to consider using the Options in encouraging, guiding and promoting the realization of Farmers’ Rights, subject to national legislation;
- reconvene the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Farmers’ Rights;
- request the Secretariat to carry out and finalize the assessment of the state of implementation of Article 9, and present the full report to the GB, taking note of the annotated outline for the assessment of the state of implementation of Article 9, as requested at GB 9, and the request that the assessment also set out the measures limiting the realization of Farmers’ Rights;
- invite the Co-Chairs of the Working Group on MLS Enhancement to take account of implications for farmers’ rights across the three hotspots in developing solutions for enhancing the MLS;
- request the Secretariat to include the possible impact of DSI/GSD on farmers’ rights in the assessment of DSI/GSD foreseen in the MYPOW;
- invite each party, which has not already done so, to consider reviewing, and, if necessary, adjusting national measures that affect the realization of farmers’ rights;
- request the Secretariat to strengthen collaboration between the Treaty and other units and partners that work for the promotion of farmers’ rights within and outside FAO, and the broader UN, including with international human rights bodies and relevant GBF targets; and
- request the Secretariat to report to GB 11 on the implementation of this resolution.

The resolution includes two annexes: the draft outline of the assessment of the state of implementation of Article 9; and the ToR for the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Farmers’ Rights.

Compliance

On [Tuesday](#), plenary heard a report on the work of the Compliance Committee ([IT/GB-10/23/14](#)), including a synthesis and analysis of implementation reports received from 91 parties, and draft elements for a resolution. On Friday, delegates approved the draft resolution.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 14/L2), the GB, on monitoring and reporting:

- decides to extend the deadline for the second reporting cycle to 1 October 2024 and urges parties that have not yet submitted their reports to submit them;
- invites the Compliance Committee to use its report to GB 8 as the baseline for identifying progress and constraints to implementation of the Treaty when comparing results from the first and the second reporting cycles; and
- invites all parties to continue submitting or updating their reports regardless of the deadline of reporting cycles.

On support and capacity development, the GB:

- requests the Secretariat to support parties in the use of the Online Reporting System and to continue the collaboration with the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre to further adapt and upgrade it; and
- encourages parties and other donors to consider providing support and financial resources for capacity development activities.

On other matters, the GB elects the members of the Compliance Committee, contained in the annex of the resolution.

FAO Contribution

On [Wednesday](#), Kaveh Zahedi, FAO Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment, introduced the FAO report ([IT/GB-10/23/15](#)) and the progress report on the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors ([IT/GB-10/23/15/Inf.1](#)).

Delegates, among others, urged FAO to consider the crucial importance of the Treaty in future budgetary allocations, including to the Treaty Secretariat.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 15/L2), the GB invites FAO to:

- continue supporting the Treaty, emphasizing the importance of FAO's continued assistance with the implementation of the Treaty at the national level, including through support for its mechanisms, such as the BSF;
- recognize the importance of the implementation of the Treaty at the national level, through different FAO programmes and initiatives;
- continue supporting the efforts to increase the membership of the Treaty with a view to making it a universal agreement;
- continue its active support to and consider funding the needs of the Treaty as a key international instrument for the fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 (zero hunger) and 15 (life on land) and the implementation of the GBF;
- take into consideration new developments within the Treaty in the review and updating of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors; and
- support parties, upon request, to integrate biodiversity for food and agriculture in the updating and revision of NBSAPs.

Cooperation

CGRFA: On [Wednesday](#), the Secretariat introduced the document ([IT/GB-10/23/16.1](#)), which was jointly prepared by the Treaty and CGRFA Secretariats. Dan Leskien, CGRFA Acting Secretary, presented the CGRFA report and the draft third report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (SOW PGRFA) ([IT/GB-10/23/16.1/Inf.1](#) and [Inf.2](#)). On [Thursday](#), plenary approved a draft resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.1/L1) as amended, to specify that joint work on the effects of seed policies be subject to available financial resources, and that symposia addressing in situ, ex situ, and on-farm conservation use virtual conferencing tools.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.1/L2), the GB, among others: welcomes ongoing cooperation between the CGRFA and the GB and the joint activities undertaken by their Secretariats during the intersessional period; and requests the Secretariat to regularly report any relevant developments in the cooperation with the CGRFA.

The GB requests the Secretariat to continue strengthening collaboration and coordination with the CGRFA Secretariat to promote coherence in the development and implementation of the respective programmes of work of the two bodies, and in particular with regard to:

- the finalization of the Third Report on SOW PGRFA; updating of the Second Global Plan of Action for PGRFA, the revision of the World Information and Early Warning System on PGRFA reporting system, and the GLIS;
- the organization of symposia addressing in situ, ex situ and on-farm conservation of PGRFA;
- effects of seed policies, laws, and regulations;
- implementation and monitoring of the Second Global Plan of Action for PGRFA, including technical instruments that facilitate its implementation, such as the Genebank Standards for PGRFA and work on sustainable use of PGRFA;
- assembling relevant information for measuring and monitoring monetary and non-monetary benefit-sharing;
- ABS and DSI/GSD on PGRFA; and
- joint efforts to advocate for the consideration of the objectives and relevant work of the CGRFA, and the GB of the Treaty in global strategies and frameworks, such as the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and the GBF.

Global Crop Diversity Trust: On [Wednesday](#), the Secretariat introduced the document on cooperation activities ([IT/GB-10/23/16.2](#)) and the Crop Trust introduced its report ([IT/GB-10/23/16.2.2](#)). Many supported ongoing cooperation between the two Secretariats and welcomed a key example of such cooperation, the Global Crop Diversity Summit (14 November 2023, Berlin, Germany), which raised political awareness of the need for strengthening crop diversity. On [Thursday](#), delegates approved a draft resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.2/L1), as amended by ECUADOR and NIGERIA to strengthen references to the Treaty expanding and sustaining cooperation with the Crop Trust.

Final Outcome: The policy guidance to the Crop Trust (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.2/L2) contains two parts on policy guidance, and other matters.

On policy guidance, the GB, among others, requests the GB Chair and the Secretariat to inform the Crop Trust Executive Board on the decisions made by the GB, and provides policy guidance for resource mobilization, scientific, and technical matters, the GLIS, communication and outreach, and mainstreaming global crop conservation strategies.

The GB among others, commends the substantial increase in cooperation on resource mobilization by the Crop Trust and the Treaty; and recommends that the Crop Trust continue sustaining and expanding its cooperation with the Treaty on mobilizing resources, and further encourages donors to give priority to their jointly designed and implemented initiatives, projects, and programmes.

On scientific and technical matters, the GB welcomes initiatives promoted by the Crop Trust to support national genebanks, including training in genebank management and the development of standard operating protocols; and welcomes the organization of a high-level panel of experts on genetic diversity of sorghum and millets for food security and sustainable agriculture during the International Year of Millets.

On GLIS, the GB invites the Crop Trust, the Treaty, and FAO to continue collaborating on training and capacity-development

activities in information systems and documentation of PGRFA; and invites the Crop Trust to continue participating in the GLIS Scientific Advisory Committee.

On mainstreaming global crop conservation strategies, the GB:

- takes note of the recommendations in the white paper on mainstreaming on governance, development and implementation of the Global Crop Conservation Strategies (GCCS);
- welcomes the recommendation that an international technical advisory committee is established to provide guidance on the scope, format, timing, and priority crops for the GCCS; and
- requests the Crop Trust and the Treaty to develop a concept note on the establishment and funding of an international technical advisory committee.

The GB also requests the GB 10 Bureau to carry out the selection and appointment of members to the Executive Board of the Crop Trust to fill any vacancy that may arise before GB 11.

CBD and Nagoya Protocol: On [Wednesday](#), the Secretariat presented the report ([IT/GB-10/23/16.3](#)), highlighting cooperation under the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), including on knowledge management, information systems, and indicators for the implementation of the GBF and the SDGs. The CBD presented its report ([IT/GB-10/23/16.3/Inf.1](#)), noting that the MoC is under review for renewal.

On [Thursday](#), delegates considered the draft resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.3/L1), and debated whether the GB should “welcome” or “take note of” recent developments and ongoing processes under the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol. They agreed to a proposal by BRAZIL to “take note with appreciation” of such developments, and approved the draft resolution.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.3/L.2), the GB, among others:

- emphasizes the importance of maintaining cooperation, complementarity, and coherence as well as avoiding duplication between the Treaty, the CBD, and other biodiversity-related conventions, in the implementation of the GBF;
- emphasizes the importance of including PGRFA in the second global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services, where relevant;
- welcomes the establishment of the GBF Fund and requests the Secretariat to follow developments in its implementation and report back to GB 11;
- takes note of the previous work and ongoing CBD processes in relation to its gender plan of action and programme of work on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the Convention related to Indigenous Peoples and local communities that are of relevance to a gender responsive approach and supportive of the implementation of the Treaty, in particular Article 9 on farmers’ rights;
- welcomes the on-going collaboration between the Secretariats of the Treaty and the CBD in the development of indicators on benefit-sharing under the GBF; and
- requests the Secretariat to collaborate and coordinate with the Secretariat of the CBD on issues related to DSI/GSD on genetic resources in order to promote coherence and mutual supportiveness.

Other Organizations: On [Wednesday](#), the Secretariat presented the reports, including Norway’s report on the Svalbard Global Seed Vault ([IT/GB-10/23/16.4](#), [16.4.2](#), and [16.4.3](#)).

Discussions continued on [Thursday](#). Several international organizations reported on their activities of relevance to, or in support of, the implementation of the Treaty.

Final Outcomes: In the final resolution on **international bodies and organizations** (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.4/L2), the GB requests the Secretariat to, among others:

- continue actively participating in relevant meetings and processes of the biodiversity-related conventions to enhance collaboration in GBF implementation;
- continue participating in relevant activities of the InforMEA Initiative and collaborating with the World Conservation Monitoring Center for the development of a new version of the Online Reporting System and other related activities in support of the CBD’s monitoring of GBF implementation;
- continue strengthening collaboration with the African Union Commission, and continue participating in relevant meetings of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants, as appropriate, and subject to the availability of financial resources; and
- continue to report to the GB on cooperation with other relevant international bodies and organizations, including with the UN Human Rights Council, and other international human rights bodies and related collaborative activities.

In the final resolution on **Article 15 Institutions** (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.4.2/L2), the GB, among others, commends the eleven CGIAR centres that signed agreements under Article 15 of the Treaty for submitting a joint report to the GB, and requests the Secretariat to continue holding regular or periodic consultations with them on implementation of the agreements and policy guidance, including on the transfer of PGRFA in the collections with the SMTA.

The GB requests the Secretariat to liaise with the CGIAR centres promoting the Global Plant Cryopreservation Initiative, the Crop Trust, and others to support governance and policy arrangements for cryopreservation in the framework of the Treaty.

On the **Svalbard Global Seed Vault** (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 16.4.3/L2), the GB notes the new deposits of seed samples during the three openings of the Seed Vault in 2022 and requests the Secretariat to explore further with the Government of Norway other practical means to enhance the linkages between the Treaty and the Seed Vault, including linking data through the GLIS.

Multi-Year Programme of Work

MYPOW: On the basis of the MYPOW review ([IT/GB-10/23/17.1](#)), plenary considered a draft resolution on the MYPOW (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 17.1/L1) on Friday. Delegates discussed the annexed table on major outputs and milestones for 2024-2029. On future work on conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA (Articles 5 and 6), a range of minor edits were agreed for clearer focus on key upcoming work items. There was some discussion about whether the MYPOW should scope items for GB 12, with delegates ultimately agreeing to do so, on the basis they can be reviewed and edited ahead of GB 11.

On farmers’ rights, the US, supported by CANADA and INDIA, asked that the MYPOW not refer to “options and conclusions” being developed by the assessment of the implementation of Article 9. Delegates approved the table with these comments, along with the resolution.

Final Outcome: In the resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 17.1/L1), the GB adopts the MYPOW 2024-2029, which plans and structures the work of the GB, highlighting key issues for consideration and the expected major outputs and milestones to be achieved at each GB session.

DSI/GSD: On [Thursday](#), the Secretariat introduced documents reporting on developments on DSI in other international fora and compiling submissions on capacity-building needs for accessing and using DSI/GSD ([IT/GB-10/23/17.2](#) and [17.2/Inf.1](#)). Regional statements highlighted the need to ensure fair and equitable benefit-sharing from the use of DSI, including capacity building and technology transfer, and drew attention to CBD COP Decision 15/9.

On Friday, delegates considered a draft resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 17.2/L1). They agreed to “welcome” CBD COP Decision 15/9. Debate ensued on a GRULAC proposal to add language from the CBD decision on the need to share benefits arising from the use of DSI fairly and equitably. NEAR EAST, TUNISIA, KENYA, BURKINA FASO, NAMIBIA, NORWAY, GERMANY, and the PHILIPPINES supported the proposal, with NORTH AMERICA, JAPAN, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, and the UK opposing it. A compromise was reached to accept the reference to fair and equitable sharing of benefits from DSI with the qualification that the CBD decision requires this “among other elements.”

Delegates also discussed an invitation to the Working Group on enhancing the MLS to take into account different scenarios and options for a multilateral mechanism to be developed in the CBD framework. NORTH AMERICA, supported by many, noted the Working Group does this already as part of its deliberations on DSI. GRULAC called for retaining the invitation. Delegates agreed on compromise language inviting the Working Group on enhancing the MLS to examine possible ways to address DSI/GSD, taking into account CBD developments, including progress in establishing the multilateral mechanism, as well as initiatives in other relevant fora.

Delegates agreed on a proposal that acknowledges and welcomes the technical assistance undertaken by CGIAR to reduce capacity gaps in generation, access, and use of DSI/GSD. Agreement was also reached on: text requesting the Secretariat to support subsidiary bodies, in particular those on the enhancement of the MLS, farmers’ rights, and sustainable use, and continue monitoring developments in relevant international forums; and a call that encourages CBD parties to develop a solution for benefit-sharing from the use on DSI on genetic resources, that is mutually supportive and adaptable to the Treaty. The draft resolution was approved as amended.

Final Outcome: In the resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 17.2/L2), the GB acknowledges there is not yet an agreed definition of DSI/GSD. It welcomes CBD COP Decision 15/9, which includes, among other elements, an agreement that the benefits from the use of DSI on genetic resources should be shared fairly and equitably; and encourages CBD parties, in further developing a solution for benefit-sharing from the use of DSI on genetic resources, to consider how it might be mutually supportive of, and adaptable to, the Treaty.

It requests the Secretariat to continue monitoring developments in all relevant international fora, and continue coordinating with the CBD and CGRFA Secretariats in activities related to DSI/GSD.

It invites the Working Group on enhancement of the MLS to examine possible ways to address DSI/GSD in the package of measures, taking into account CBD developments and other relevant initiatives.

It welcomes and acknowledges the technical assistance undertaken by the CGIAR centres to reduce the existing capacity gap regarding generation, access to, and use of DSI/GSD; and invites parties and others to promote technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, training and capacity development, and scientific cooperation.

Work Programme and Budget

On [Monday](#), the Secretariat introduced the draft work programme and budget for 2024-25 ([IT/GB-10/23/18 Rev.2](#) and [IT/GB-10/23/18 Add.1](#)) and the implementation and financial reports of the work programme for 2022-2023 ([IT/GB-10/23/18.1](#) and [18.2 Rev.1](#)), noting the costs of the Working Group to enhance the MLS could be offset by savings from the 2022-23 biennium. Plenary also established the Budget Committee, which met throughout the week.

On Friday, Co-Chair of the Budget Committee Alwin Kopšec (Switzerland) reported back to plenary on the deliberations of the Committee during the week on the 2024-25 biennium (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 18/L1). The draft resolution on the budget was agreed without further discussion.

Final Outcome: In the final resolution (IT/GB-10/23/RES-Item 18/L1), the GB:

- adopts the Treaty’s Work Programme and the Core Administrative Budget for the biennium 2024-2025, the indicative scale of contributions, and Secretariat staffing structure;
- approves, on an exceptional one-time basis, the supplementary appropriation of carry-forward from previous biennia, an amount up to USD 408,404 to fund up to four formal meetings of the Working Group on the enhancement of the MLS, and notes this approval does not create a precedent for future work programmes and budgets;
- requests the Secretariat to explore possible mechanisms or approaches to improve the rate of contributions to the Core Administrative Budget by parties;
- encourages FAO to increase the contribution to the Treaty, and invites parties that are also members of relevant FAO Governing Bodies to consider possibilities for enhancing sustainable regular programme funding;
- decides to retain the level of the Working Capital Reserve at USD 580,000; and
- requests the Secretariat to provide a detailed financial report and a summary narrative report on the implementation of the Work Programme 2024-2025, at least six weeks in advance of GB 11.

Proposal for the Renewal and Term of Office the Secretary

On [Thursday](#), plenary welcomed the extension of the appointment of Secretary Kent Nnadozie by FAO until the end of 2025 ([IT/GB-10/23/19.1](#)).

Delegates also discussed a proposal ([IT/GB-10/23/19.2](#)) to amend the GB Rules of Procedure to mandate appointment of the Secretary by the FAO Director General for four years, with GB approval, with the possibility of renewal only once for another four years, subject to a prior assessment of the incumbent’s performance. Some delegates questioned the need for an assessment but agreed to it after clarification that it would be consistent with existing assessment procedures for FAO staff.

Final Outcome: Delegates agreed to amend Rule III of the Rules of Procedure of the GB to give effect to the proposal.

Adoption of the Report and Closing Plenary

On Friday afternoon, rapporteur Milena Savic Ivanov presented the GB 10 draft report (IT/GB 10/23/Draft Report). On the Swiss proposal to amend the Treaty, delegates included that “the Government of Switzerland reaffirmed its proposal for an amendment of the Treaty and that it be, again, considered at the next Session of the GB.” Plenary then adopted the report.

Secretary Nnadozie informed plenary that GB 11 will be held in the final quarter of 2025, at a location to be decided in consultation with the Bureau, outside Rome.

In regional statements, delegates expressed gratitude to the Secretariat and outgoing Chair Yasmina El Bahloul for her outstanding leadership, and congratulated incoming GB Chair Alwin Kopše. AFRICA urged for progress on farmers’ rights and the enhancement of the MLS. ASIA highlighted the disparity in views around the three “hotspots” in the process on enhancing the MLS. GRULAC expressed satisfaction with the reconvening of the Expert Group on Farmers’ Rights.

The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY called for an emergency commitment to support the conservation and availability of farmers’ seeds in war-affected territories, and called for resolving the international issues of traceability and the prohibition of patents on DSI. CIVIL SOCIETY focused on the need for: recognizing farmers’ rights as a cross-cutting issue in Treaty implementation; accountability and transparency in the enhancement of the MLS, including on DSI; and attention to legal and governance gaps in the expansion of Annex I. ACADEMIA congratulated Chair El Bahloul for successfully leading the integration of women’s recognition as guardians of crop diversity, and their contribution to sustainable agriculture and food security.

Secretary Nnadozie expressed his appreciation to parties for their confidence, saying that the Treaty is not just a legal instrument but a symbol for collaboration and cooperation. Urging that the spirit of cooperation continues into the next session, Chair El Bahloul gavelled the meeting to a close at 5:50 pm.

A Brief Analysis of GB 10

The year 2023 has been a turning point in global biodiversity governance. Adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) by the fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), alongside a new treaty on marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) under the UN Convention on Law of the Sea, changed the international policy landscape and renewed faith in multilateralism. Convened in this new era, the tenth session of the Governing Body (GB 10) of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) necessarily delved into the symbiotic relationship between the Treaty and the CBD, including the GBF, in conserving biodiversity and using it sustainably, and ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources.

Aspects of collaboration between the Treaty and relevant international instruments and organizations came into the spotlight as the GB worked through its agenda, ranging from the revision process on the enhancement of the Treaty’s Multilateral System (MLS) of access and benefit-sharing to farmers’ rights and the impact of technological developments on work under the Treaty, including digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources.

This brief analysis will focus on interlinkages between the Treaty and other international processes, highlighting the Treaty’s role as a vital partner for the effective implementation of the GBF but also the Treaty’s potential to serve as an inspiration and model in the development of multilateral benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Seeds on Fertile Ground

The interrelated global crises of biodiversity loss and climate change represent significant threats to global food security. Biodiversity loss limits genetic resources and disrupts agricultural systems by reducing resilience to pests, diseases, and extreme weather events. Climate change compounds these challenges with increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, which negatively affect crop yields. The global COVID-19 pandemic highlighted these critical interconnections between human and ecosystem health.

As was the case for all international processes, the pandemic significantly disrupted the regular biennial cycle of the Treaty, necessitating the postponement of GB 9 from 2021 to 2022. GB 10 thus convened just 14 months after GB 9, marking the shortest intersessional period in the Treaty’s history, in which a record number of 21 meetings were conducted.

At the same time, the past year was marked by major global developments in biodiversity governance, changing the environment in which the Treaty operates. Adoption of the GBF in December 2022 marked a significant step toward international collaboration in safeguarding biodiversity, signaling a collective commitment to reverse biodiversity loss and build a more sustainable future. As part of the GBF, agreement to establish a multilateral mechanism from the use of digital sequence information (DSI) concluded years of debate on whether the international community should ensure fair and equitable benefit-sharing from the use of DSI on genetic resources. Reflecting advancements in genomics and bioinformatics, which risk making access and benefit-sharing (ABS) instruments obsolete, this agreement aims to ensure that benefit-sharing requirements extend to the use of the information content of genetic resources. Momentum continued to build when the new treaty on marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction also recognized benefit-sharing requirements from use of DSI.

These developments touch directly on the ongoing multi-year negotiations on the enhancement of the Treaty’s MLS. DSI is one of the main contentious areas identified by the Working Group Co-Chairs as requiring urgent attention, along with the expansion of the list of crops in the MLS and payment structure and rates. Representing the diverse priorities of the negotiating parties, these areas are highly interlinked.

Developing countries draw attention to the extremely limited monetary benefit-sharing accumulated from users of the MLS and called for focus on increasing it, including from the use of DSI. Developed countries largely focus on the need to expand access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and avoid placing restrictions on agricultural research and access to DSI. These positions were reiterated at GB 10, although the meeting’s real focus was on the process going forward. The GB mandated the Working Group on the enhancement of the MLS to conduct four meetings during the upcoming biennium, along with regional and informal consultations, to allow for sufficient progress in the negotiations. The true impact of the CBD decision to establish a multilateral mechanism on benefit-sharing from DSI use remains to be seen as these negotiations are unfolding in parallel to the development and operationalization of the CBD multilateral mechanism on DSI.

From Seeds to Innovative Solutions

GB 10 convened under the theme “From seeds to innovative solutions, safeguarding our future: contributing to the implementation of the GBF for sustainable food systems.” The theme underscored the pivotal role of the Treaty in conserving agricultural biodiversity and sharing the benefits from its use fairly and equitably, for food security, environmental sustainability, and resilience of food systems, further highlighting the interconnected goals of the Treaty and the GBF.

Beyond the MLS and governance of DSI, the need for synergies was raised during discussions on several GB 10 agenda items. Discussions on the Treaty’s draft capacity-development strategy, for example, had participants pointing to the need for complementarity with the CBD long-term strategic framework for capacity building and development for implementation of the GBF. Participants also drew attention to capacity-building programmes serving the objectives of both conventions, such as those of the CGIAR. Others noted funding opportunities for PGRFA conservation to arise in relation to the newly established GBF Fund.

Discussions on DSI also provided an opportunity to showcase capacity gaps and needs and to reiterate calls to enhance capacity building and technology transfer. At the same time, calls for interoperability among existing information systems under the two instruments stressed the need to enhance transparency around the rights and obligations of users when accessing, sharing, and using PGRFA and associated information. Developing countries strive to enhance their capabilities to manage and utilize data for conservation and sustainable development objectives by leveraging the strengths of both the CBD and the Treaty. The sharing of scientific and technological advances, including from the use of DSI, will remain a key element of innovative solutions for the Treaty, with South-South and triangular collaborations being instrumental in reducing global inequalities.

Sowing Global Harmony

So, given all of the developments over the past year, is the Treaty still relevant? This question came up throughout the week and the answer is a resounding “yes.” For one, the Treaty is the only legally binding agreement recognizing farmers’ rights, an item that was prominent during GB 10, with intense deliberations.

The issue of farmers’ rights has taken center stage since the Treaty’s inception, in the face of commercial pressures over traditional farming and seed saving and exchange practices. Farming communities around the world have been the stewards of agricultural biodiversity and the developers of crop varieties throughout history. Until recently, agricultural innovation was led and created by farmers and was interlinked with biodiversity conservation for subsistence and the resilience of production. While such traditional crop varieties provide the raw material for modern commercial varieties, farmers’ contributions are not adequately reflected in mainstream agricultural production.

The recognition of farmers’ rights and their contribution to global food security under the Treaty has attempted to rectify this injustice, stemming from the industrialization of agriculture, the professionalization of plant breeding, and conflicts of interest related to intellectual property rights over plant varieties. It has also aimed to promote farmers’ participation in decision-making processes, and to create a political space for discussions that directly impact their interests.

Considering these factors, Treaty debates on farmers’ rights have always been intense, reflecting parties’ different visions of agricultural development and preferred models for agricultural production. GB 10 was no exception, as delegates debated the way forward, focusing on the scope of an assessment of the state of implementation of farmers’ rights and the group to conduct it. In the end, those promoting implementation of farmers’ rights as a crucial means to achieve global food security celebrated final agreement on reconvening the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers’ Rights as a positive and forward-looking measure towards assessing the state of implementation.

Solutions for Our Future

The GB now returns to its normal cycle, with two years of intersessional work before GB 11 in late 2025. Between the shifting multilateral environment and rapid technological advancements, the Treaty could face an identity crisis in the upcoming biennium. Future decisions addressing the enhancement of the MLS to increase benefit-sharing, the expansion of the list of crops in the MLS, and the incorporation of DSI in the scope of the Treaty are likely to be crucial for its future relevance.

Various multilateral ABS mechanisms are currently under development under the CBD, the BBNJ agreement, and the World Health Organization. In this regard, the Treaty was dubbed a “role-model,” providing the most advanced and operational multilateral ABS instrument, able to showcase twenty years of experience and ample lessons learned.

These rapidly advancing multilateral environmental discussions place a responsibility on the Treaty to share its experiences but also to shine the light ahead on ways in which multilateralism can be a catalyst for achieving a convergence of global goals related to biodiversity, sustainable development, and global food security. As Secretary Kent Nnadozie remarked at the meeting’s close, “The seeds of innovation have been sown and it is our responsibility to nurture them into solutions for our future and our children’s future.”

Upcoming Meetings

2023 UN Climate Change Conference: The Conference will feature the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the 18th session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 18), and the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 5), convening along with meetings of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies. The first Global Stocktake of the implementation of the Paris Agreement will conclude at the meeting. **dates:** 30 November - 12 December 2023 **location:** Dubai, United Arab Emirates **www:** unfccc.int/cop28

Bern III Conference on Cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions for the implementation of the GBF: The Conference aims to contribute to the efficient and effective implementation of the GBF by identifying opportunities to drive and coordinate an inclusive collaborative approach while respecting the respective mandates of biodiversity-related conventions and other relevant multilateral agreements and the UN. **dates:** 23-25 January 2024 **location:** Bern, Switzerland **www:** unep.org/events/conference/bern-iii-conference-cooperation-among-biodiversity-related-conventions

UNEA-6: Preceded by the sixth meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, which will take place from 19-23 February 2023, the sixth meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) will convene under the theme “Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.” **dates:** 26 February – 1 March 2024 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** unep.org/environmentalassembly/unea6

SBSTTA 26: The 26th meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice will continue deliberations in advance of CBD COP 16. **dates:** 13-18 May 2024 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** cbd.int/meetings

CBD SBI 4: The fourth meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) will review items related to the implementation of the CBD and the GBF in advance of CBD COP 16. **dates:** 21-29 May 2024 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** cbd.int/meetings

2024 UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF): The 2024 session of the HLPF will convene on the theme “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.” It will include in-depth review of SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals). **dates:** 8-17 July 2024 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** hlpf.un.org/2024

Second meeting of the CBD Working Group on DSI: Parties will continue discussing the development and operationalization of a multilateral mechanism for benefit-sharing from the use of DSI on genetic resources, including a global fund, set to be finalized by CBD COP 16. **dates:** 12-16 August 2024 **location:** Montreal, Canada **www:** cbd.int/meetings

Summit of the Future: The Summit aims to accelerate progress towards international commitments and take concrete action to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities, with an action-oriented outcome document called “The Pact for the Future.” **dates:** 22-23 September 2024 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/en/summit-of-the-future

CBD SBI 5: This meeting will continue review of items related to the implementation of the CBD and the GBF in advance of CBD COP 16. **dates:** 16-18 October 2024 (TBC) **location:** TBC **www:** cbd.int/meetings

2024 UN Biodiversity Conference: CBD COP 16, COP/MOP 11 to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and COP/MOP 5 to the Nagoya Protocol on ABS will address a series of policy, administrative and implementation-related items of relevance to the CBD and its protocols. **dates:** 21 October - 1 November 2024 **location:** TBC **www:** cbd.int/meetings

UNCCD COP 16: This meeting of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification will review global progress made toward land degradation neutrality and confront pressing issues like enhancing drought resilience, promoting women’s land rights, and combating sand and dust storms. **dates:** 2-13 December 2024 **location:** Riyadh, Saudi Arabia **www:** unccd.int

IPBES 11: The meeting of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services will consider the assessment on interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food and health and the transformative change assessment. **dates:** 10-16 December 2024 **location:** Windhoek, Namibia **www:** ipbes.net

CGRFA 20: The 20th regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture will address a range of issues related to its MYPOW. **dates:** 24-28 March 2025 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** fao.org/cgrfa

ITPGRFA GB 11: The next meeting of the Governing Body will reflect on the implementation of the Treaty, among others regarding the enhancement of its Multilateral System and farmers’ rights. **dates:** 24-29 November 2025 **location:** TBD **www:** fao.org/plant-treaty

For additional meetings, see sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

ABS	Access and Benefit-sharing
BBNJ	Biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction
BSF	Benefit-sharing Fund
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CGRFA	Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
COP	Conference of the Parties
DSI	Digital sequence information
ERG	European Regional Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GB	Governing Body
GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GLIS	Global Information System
GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
GSD	Genetic sequence data
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
MLS	Multilateral System
MYPOW	Multi-Year Programme of Work
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NFPs	National focal points
PGRFA	Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ToR	Terms of Reference