

ITPGRFA GB 11 Highlights: Monday, 24 November 2025

Following an opening session, the 11th session of the Governing Body (GB 11) of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA or Treaty) initiated deliberations on a range of organizational and implementation-related matters. Discussions also commenced on the meeting's core item, the enhancement of the Treaty's Multilateral System (MLS) of access and benefit-sharing (ABS).

Plenary

Inaugural Session: Following an Indigenous Peruvian blessing ceremony, GB 11 Chair Alwin Kopše (Switzerland) welcomed participants highlighting the profound value of crop diversity, and called for the active engagement of all sectors with the Treaty.

Carmen Inés Vegas Guerrero, Vice Minister of Agrarian Development and Irrigation, Peru, drew attention to the MLS enhancement and farmers' role in preserving agrobiodiversity, stressing the opportunity to bring together science, innovation, and traditional knowledge for global food security.

Christian Hofer, Director, Federal Office for Agriculture, Switzerland, urged concluding the negotiations on the enhancement of the MLS, stressing that a coherent and balanced package of measures is within reach, and called for equal attention on farmers' rights.

Stressing that "multilateral cooperation can turn our shared heritage into shared progress," Godfrey Magwenzi, Deputy Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), highlighted the untapped potential of a wide range of crops for food security and nutrition and called for forward-looking decisions on the enhancement of the MLS. Kaveh Zahedi, Director, Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment, FAO, introduced a vote of thanks, including to co-hosts Peru and Switzerland.

Opening Ceremony: Following a short film showcasing the significance of the International Treaty, Nils Kristen Sandtrøen, Minister of Agriculture and Food, Norway, via video message, stressed that agriculture needs to adapt to climate change, and highlighted Norway's contributions to the Benefit-Sharing Fund (BSF), equal to 0.1% of all annual seed sales in the country, and

the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, offering an additional level of security to seed collections.

Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), emphasized, via video, that the multi-faceted, interconnected crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation, and pollution and waste, can only be addressed holistically through a whole-of-society approach.

Simon Heck, Director-General, International Potato Center (CIP), CGIAR, highlighted their contribution to the Treaty's implementation, most visibly through Article 15 (*ex situ* collections) agreements that regulate the management of PGRFA collections in CGIAR genebanks.

Catherine Bertini, Chair, Crop Trust Executive Board, drew attention to the [Crop Diversity Day](#) held on 21 November, its call to address persistent gaps across the global genebank system and focus on vegetable crops with high nutritional, cultural, and ecological value.

Michael Keller, Secretary General, International Seed Federation, noting that in several regions farmers lack access to quality seeds, highlighted the importance of balanced plant breeders' and farmers' rights in building resilient agricultural systems.

Jorge Ganoza, Executive President, Instituto Nacional de Innovación Agraria (INIA), Peru, stressed the importance of farmers' efforts in conservation, adding that happiness relies not only on wealth but also on access to healthy food and environmental protection.

Urging the need to ensure the Treaty supports farmers, peasants, and Indigenous Peoples, Mavis Gofa, Seed and Knowledge Initiative, Zimbabwe, stressed that food security is not about producing more, but about ensuring that everyone has access to nutritious food without compromising the environment.

Dan Leskien, FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, highlighted the central role of the MLS as a leading model for ABS policy-making. He called for adaptability and fair, multilateral benefit-sharing solutions that respect State sovereignty.

Julia Ruth Mamani Condori, Association of Guardians of Native Potatoes of Central Peru (AGUAPAN) Youth Network, highlighted their work in preserving over one thousand potato

varieties and underscored that fair and equitable benefit-sharing can help young farmers remain in their communities.

Underlining differing views on the enhancement of the MLS, ITPGRFA Secretary Kent Nnadozie called this moment “a generational opportunity” to set the Treaty on a renewed course to build a more balanced and predictable system.

Organizational Matters: GB 11 Chair Kopše introduced the provisional agenda and timetable ([IT/GB-11/25/1](#) and [1.2 Rev.2](#)). JAPAN requested that contact groups on farmers’ rights and the enhancement of the MLS do not overlap. URUGUAY, with ARGENTINA and BRAZIL, called for merging discussions on interconnected agenda items. Delegates adopted the agenda and timetable; approved the list of observers ([IT/GB-11/25/1.3](#)); and welcomed Bahrain, Barbados, Colombia, and South Africa as new Parties to the Treaty. They accepted the nomination of Noluthando Netnou-Nkoana (South Africa) as rapporteur and established committees on credentials and the budget.

Statements: EGYPT said that an ambitious enhancement process, must be balanced by clarity, equity, and sovereign rights, allowing for national exemptions of species from the MLS. They stressed that a revised MLS must include mandatory benefit-sharing payments from the use of digital sequence information/genetic sequence data (DSI/GSD) and establish a robust traceability and monitoring mechanism.

Canada, for NORTH AMERICA, highlighted the need to preserve genetic diversity and ensure the utilization of PGRFA for the benefit of all, including future generations. Sweden, for the EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP (ERG), recognized the importance of strengthening the Global Information System (GLIS), the sustainable use of PGRFA, and the effective implementation of the Funding Strategy.

Brazil, for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), emphasized that the MLS cannot include all current and future PGRFA and should address benefit-sharing from DSI/GSD use. Papua New Guinea, for SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, stressed their reliance on climate change-resistant plant varieties and called for avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy and strengthening capacity-building, including on DSI/GSD and farmers’ rights.

Egypt, for NEAR EAST, called for assessing progress made by Parties in implementing their obligations under the Treaty, and highlighted the role of farmer communities and their relevant traditional knowledge. Uganda, for AFRICA, called for treating all the agenda items as equally important.

BRAZIL stressed that: Parties have sovereignty over their natural resources and any expansion of Annex I (list of crops in the MLS) must remain voluntary and be accompanied by safeguards on farmers’ rights and traditional knowledge; DSI-related issues must be addressed in coherence with CBD [Decision 16/2](#) (DSI on genetic resources); and the payment structure in the draft revised standard material transfer agreement (SMTA) is central for a balanced approach.

COLOMBIA expressed its commitment to enhancing the MLS and achieving effective benefit-sharing, ensuring that communities that protect biodiversity are the BSF’s recipients.

ARGENTINA noted that any potential expansion of Annex I should respect Parties’ sovereignty without undermining the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol, and stressed the need to ensure sustainable contributions in the long term, and transparency on who uses PGRFA and for what purpose.

TOGO stressed that any decision must reflect the principles of equity, transparency, and solidarity. SOUTH AFRICA drew attention to the priorities of its G-20 Presidency, including the stewardship of biodiversity, and genetic and natural resources. They highlighted agrobiodiversity’s importance in building resilient and sustainable agri-food systems and recognizing farmers’ role in the conservation and diversification of food production. INDIA noted that several elements of the draft package of measures to enhance the MLS, including DSI/GSD, the expansion of Annex I, and the revised SMTA, carry implications for sovereignty, farmers’ rights, and food security, in particular for developing countries.

CGIAR stressed the need to: expand Annex I to achieve food and nutritional security; increase benefit-sharing through the MLS, expressing support for the subscription model for the payment structure under the draft revised SMTA and highlighting existing non-monetary benefits such as the free distribution of CGIAR-improved germplasm; and strengthen capacities for PGRFA conservation, highlighting on-farm conservation and use. The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY (IPC) cautioned against any Annex I amendment without addressing DSI/GSD. They called for national laws to regulate DSI/GSD and avoid potential jurisdictional conflicts with the CBD’s multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism from DSI use, and urged respect for farmers’ collective rights and those of Mother Earth. SeaRice, on behalf of CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs), called for a standing committee on farmers’ rights and for approving the draft strategy on the “Options for encouraging, guiding, and promoting the realization of Farmers’ Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty.” Noting differences among CSOs across regions and circumstances, the THIRD WORLD NETWORK (TWN) requested having two speakers from CSOs per contact group.

Work Programme and Budget: The Secretariat presented the draft work programme and budget for 2026–2027 ([IT/GB-11/25/18](#) and [18 Add.1](#)), noting it proposes zero nominal growth, and highlighted concerns about the low number of Parties contributing to the Core Administrative Budget.

Switzerland, for ERG, said strengthening the core budget is desirable but agreed to a zero nominal growth budget due to the circumstances. The US, for NORTH AMERICA, said the historically limited number of Parties making contributions is unsustainable and creates uncertainty. With ARGENTINA, they stressed prioritizing the Treaty’s core objectives and avoiding overburdening the Secretariat.

ARGENTINA, ECUADOR, and URUGUAY urged Parties to make contributions, with ECUADOR noting they should be an obligation for all Parties, and URUGUAY underscoring the need for a mechanism to encourage voluntary contributions.

Iraq, for NEAR EAST, underscored that contributions ensure the Treaty implementation and support to developing countries, stressing the importance of transparency and partnerships. JAPAN called for increased effectiveness, transparency, and accountability.

Report of the Chairperson: Plenary took note of the Chairperson's report ([IT/GB-11/25/05](#)). Chair Kopše invited Parties to embrace a renewed spirit of multilateral cooperation to improve the Treaty's functioning. Delegates commended his leadership, with several highlighting his work on the active involvement of youth in implementation

Report of the Secretary: Secretary Nnadozie presented his report ([IT/GB-11/25/06](#)), emphasizing: intense intersessional work; four new Parties; the approval of 28 projects under the fifth cycle of the BSF, representing an investment of USD 11 million; and emergency support to germplasm collections at risk in Ukraine, Yemen, Sudan, the Philippines, Lao PDR, Lebanon, and Costa Rica, with operations underway in Guatemala and Vietnam.

Delegates expressed appreciation for intersessional work. The ERG highlighted progress achieved in the implementation of the Funding Strategy and the finalization of the draft Capacity Development Strategy and Action Plan. ECUADOR thanked Parties that made voluntary contributions, and underlined the contrast between the over 7 million accessions of PGRFA through the MLS and lack of monetary benefit-sharing contributions.

NORTH AMERICA encouraged holding meetings virtually when feasible. Noting the region's diverse capacities, ASIA called for Parties in a position to do so to provide enhanced financial support. ARGENTINA suggested adding more detailed statistics on the implementation and operations of the MLS to support evaluation of the Treaty.

Implementation and Operations of the MLS: The Secretariat introduced documents on MLS implementation, including on MLS operations, reviews and assessments, the emergency reserve for germplasm collections at risk, and the Third Party Beneficiary ([IT/GB-11/25/9.1.Rev.1](#), [9.1/Inf.1](#), [16.4.2](#), [9.1.2](#), [9.1/Inf.2](#) [9.1.3](#), [9.1/Inf.3](#) and [9.1.4](#)). The Netherlands, for ERG, appreciated the information on the number of transfers per region and suggested that it also be disaggregated by country. CANADA suggested clarifying whether the accessions were within the country, and separating accessions from international agricultural research centers to better understand Parties' material contributions to the MLS.

Japan, for ASIA, commended the Secretariat for the reports, stressing that they help understand the *status quo* and identify areas for improvement. ECUADOR suggested inviting international donors to strengthen regeneration and multiplication processes of national germplasm banks.

The US suggested reflecting that the Third Party Beneficiary procedures are not legally binding. INDIA suggested greater details in terms of providers and recipients, noting that it would support Parties' actions with respect to benefit-sharing obligations.

Morocco, for AFRICA, suggested: including data on the number of recipients that upload results to GLIS and share non-monetary benefits; and, opposed by the US, providing information on commercialized products and revenues to enable monitoring of compliance with the SMTA.

Lebanon, for NEAR EAST, urged Parties to update information related to PGRFA that are accessible and available in the MLS and continuous reporting on signed SMTAs.

CAMEROON suggested inviting Parties to notify the Secretariat regarding threatened species. ARGENTINA requested additional information on, among other things: the number of beneficiaries that have uploaded information on GLIS and have shared non-monetary benefits; the four requests for emergency reserves that were considered non-eligible; and the Third Party Beneficiary.

CANADA and GERMANY shared concerns about confidentiality regarding detailed information requests made by some countries. BHUTAN called for strengthening transparency, accountability, and governance structures in the MLS to benefit all stakeholders, including small farmers. CGIAR said additional details on the materials being distributed and the recipient categories would provide more complete information for monitoring purposes.

BOTANIC GARDENS CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL highlighted their potential to complement Treaty work through their material collections, calling for more active participation. TWN expressed concerns about treating separately MLS implementation, farmers' rights, and non-monetary benefit-sharing, and about DSI from MLS material being uploaded to databases outside the control of the Governing Body.

IPC, supported by the NEAR EAST, described Israeli forces' invasion of Palestinian farms and bombardment of West Bank seed banks, and requested Parties to ensure the draft resolution reflects support for Palestinian collections. PRO SPECIE RARA noted the importance of SMTA use for foreign and domestic transfers, and of identifying loopholes that allow users to avoid their obligations.

Enhancement of the MLS: Michael Ryan (Australia) and Sunil Archak (India), Co-Chairs of the Working Group to enhance the functioning of the MLS, introduced the Co-Chairs' report ([IT/GB-11/25/9.2.2](#)). Co-Chair Ryan recalled that the Working Group used the 2019 draft package as the starting point for discussions, and received input from independent experts, including [on DSI/GSD, sales and profitability](#) of the seed sector, and from the Standing Group of Legal Experts (SGLE).

Brazil, for G-77, emphasized that a subscription model is the only option that offers a predictable, fair, and transparent benefit-sharing mechanism. They stressed that any expansion of Annex I must respect the sovereign rights of Parties and that benefit-

sharing obligations, including from use of DSI/GSD, are not optional under international law.

Highlighting the need for an MLS attractive to users, the US, for NORTH AMERICA, cautioned against a system that disincentivizes access with mandatory upfront payments. Germany, for the ERG, noting divergent views on access options in the region, underscored the link between the expansion of Annex I and increased contributions to the BSF. They stressed the need for mutually supportive implementation of different instruments to avoid double payments.

Noting diverse views in the region, Japan, for ASIA, supported a structure that is fair, inclusive, and accessible to a wide range of users, and that reflects the circumstances of all relevant stakeholders. JAPAN called for practical and workable benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Colombia, for GRULAC, JORDAN, and others supported the subscription model for payments. On the MLS expansion, INDIA stressed that it must remain voluntary and gradual. Colombia for GRULAC, TOGO, NIGER, and others supported expanding Annex I through a positive list. INDIA and JORDAN noted that a positive list approach could be explored. JAPAN supported expansion to all crops, with robust safeguards in place, ARGENTINA, PARAGUAY, ECUADOR, URUGUAY and PERU, called for fully respecting Parties' sovereign rights to decide over the material shared in the MLS. Stressing the BSF has received insufficient resources to date, GRULAC noted that expanding Annex I without tangible results would be premature.

ARGENTINA and JORDAN stressed that DSI must be addressed in the SMTA. INDIA noted that access to DSI from MLS must remain available. JAPAN opposed including benefit-sharing from DSI use in the SMTA.

The CBD Secretariat provided updates on the multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism from DSI use and establishment of the Cali Fund. The IPC stressed the need to resolve the conflict of jurisdiction between the Treaty and the CBD on DSI. The UNIVERSITY OF LIEGE underscored power imbalances in the negotiating process, warning that an expansion of Annex I without accompanying benefit-sharing and addressing challenges related to DSI would pose additional challenges for biodiversity stewards. CSOs stressed that rules on benefit-sharing payments must be clear.

The SEED INDUSTRY said that multiple payment mechanisms coupled with reasonable rates will be attractive to commercial users and cautioned against addressing DSI/GSD in the SMTA. TWN, on behalf of various CSOs, underscored that expanding Annex I without addressing governance issues will threaten national sovereignty and farmers' rights.

A contact group was established, co-chaired by Archak and Ryan.

Fostering Biodiversity and Food Security: Preserving Heritage, Cultivating a Shared Future: The Secretariat introduced background documents on the theme of the session and youth engagement ([IT/GB-11/25/7](#) and [Inf.1](#)), containing

a draft resolution. Canada, for NORTH AMERICA, suggested focusing on challenges impacting crops and how the Treaty responds, emphasizing the relationship between food security and biodiversity, with the US adding that the region does not support developing a draft strategy to facilitate the engagement of youth groups. France, for ERG, encouraged meaningful youth inclusion.

Egypt, for the NEAR EAST, called for supporting regional and local efforts to exchange PGRFA. Sri Lanka, for ASIA, highlighted the role of traditional knowledge and agricultural heritage in ensuring resilient food systems. Togo, for AFRICA, emphasized women's role in maintaining biodiversity and called for youth participation to ensure knowledge transmission. ARGENTINA called for eliminating references to youth as a specific group.

The US opposed references to climate change, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and the rights of women, noting that these are not in the Treaty's mandate. Delegates discussed the term "opportunity crops," with ECUADOR proposing "superfoods" and a CSO representative suggesting "traditional and Indigenous crops." The CBD Secretariat shared experiences regarding youth engagement. TWN suggested adding in the draft resolution references to *in situ* conservation, and peasants' and farmers' seed rights. Chair Kopše said the Bureau will propose a way forward on the draft resolution.

Contact Group

Enhancement of the MLS: Co-Chaired by Ryan and Archak, the contact group addressed the suggestions of the SGLE. Isabel López Noriega, SGLE Facilitator, presented the changes, including suggestions on the definition of "affiliate" and "sales." Delegates debated on how to address the proposals and on the way forward. The discussion will continue on Tuesday morning.

In The Corridors

Will delegates achieve consensus on the package of measures to enhance the MLS? As GB 11 initiated its deliberations, views in the corridors differed on the meeting's main item. Some pointed to the range of controversies still to be resolved on core elements of an enhanced MLS, including the payment structure and an expansion of the list of crops in Annex I. Others drew attention to the 12 years of negotiations and amount of work undertaken, noting that a balanced package is "within reach." At the same time, many called for equal attention to other important agenda items, in particular farmers' rights, and their integration in the MLS negotiations. "Farmer communities remain the main stewards of PGRFA globally, and it is our duty to ensure recognition of their contribution and reward it fairly and equitably," one participant noted, as community organizations stated that they had no wish to exchange their collective rights "for a few cents."