

ITPGRFA GB 11 Highlights: Wednesday, 26 November 2025

Negotiations on the enhancement of the Treaty's Multilateral System (MLS) of access and benefit-sharing (ABS) continued in a contact group. A morning plenary discussed items related to cooperation, the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW), and digital sequence information / genetic sequence data (DSI/GSD). Contact groups also convened on farmers' rights and on conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA). Governing Body (GB) 11 Chair Alwin Kopšè (Switzerland) held bilateral meetings with regions' representatives to identify areas of compromise on the MLS enhancement.

Plenary

Cooperation with Other Bodies and Organizations:

The Secretariat introduced reports: on cooperation with other international bodies and organizations ([IT/GB-11/25/16.4](#)); from institutions that have concluded agreements with the GB under Article 15 (*ex situ* collections held by international agricultural research centers) ([IT/GB-11/25/16.4.2](#)); and from Norway on the management and operations of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault ([IT/GB-11/25/16.4.3](#)).

Carlos Duarte, Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, drew attention to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, and underscored that the Treaty must clearly state that seed conservation and maintenance is a right of peasants and should not be persecuted. CGIAR highlighted the submission of three reports on: the experiences of the 11 CGIAR centers managing Article 15 collections; capacity-sharing on the use of DSI/GSD; and compliance of the centers with CGIAR principles on the management of intellectual assets.

The PACIFIC COMMUNITY, on behalf of other institutions holding germplasm collections, highlighted the development of a common reporting template. NORWAY stressed that by October 2025, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault held 1.4 million samples.

Estonia, for the EUROPEAN REGIONAL GROUP (ERG), suggested welcoming work under the Bern process for synergetic implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Libya, for NEAR EAST, called for transparent information-exchange mechanisms and capacity-building for national genebanks in developing countries. Zambia, for AFRICA, called for additional funding for joint capacity-building programmes, and strengthening collaboration with the African Union and regional initiatives. Tuvalu, for SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, appreciated continued policy guidance, especially for small islands, noting beneficial collaboration with CGIAR centers, reducing burdens and allowing focus on technical delivery.

JAPAN called for reaffirming that the Treaty shall not be interpreted as implying a change in the rights and obligations of

Parties under other agreements. URUGUAY highlighted the 2022 establishment of a collaborative platform for genebanks in Latin America and the Caribbean, and called on Parties to recognize and support these efforts by strengthening capacities and integrating them into national agendas. ECUADOR reported depositing 890 accessions to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault with Crop Trust support. MONGOLIA emphasized promoting coherence while respecting the mandate of each process. ZIMBABWE expressed appreciation for Crop Trust partnerships.

BOTANIC GARDENS CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL drew attention to the Global Conservation Consortium for Food Plants. The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY (IPC) pointed to a case of material collected from a non-Party and made available to the MLS by an international organization, cautioning that expansion of Annex I may deepen biopiracy in violation of Indigenous Peoples' and farmers' rights. GB 11 Chair Alwin Kopšè (Switzerland) said a revised draft resolution will be developed.

MYPOW: The Secretariat introduced the document ([IT/GB-11/25/17.1](#)), including a draft resolution on the MYPOW 2026-2031. Regarding the outputs and milestones on farmers' rights, JAPAN opposed considering category 10 (legal measures for implementing farmers' rights) of the [Options](#) for encouraging, guiding, and promoting the realization of farmers' rights. NORWAY pointed to the agreed footnote in GB 9 [Resolution 7/2022](#) and GB 10 [Resolution 7/2023](#), and called for retaining previously agreed language. Chair Kopšè said the draft resolution will be updated following Bureau consultations.

DSI/GSD: The Secretariat introduced: a review of relevant developments in other international fora, in particular the CBD and its [Decision 16/2](#) (DSI on genetic resources) ([IT/GB-11/25/17.2](#)); and a compilation of Parties' and stakeholders' submissions on activities aimed at reducing capacity gaps regarding DSI/GSD ([IT/GB-11/25/17.2/Inf.1](#)).

Canada, for NORTH AMERICA, noted that CBD Decision 16/2 is a significant development on how benefit-sharing can function on DSI/GSD. They suggested encouraging Parties to take into account, in their national ABS frameworks, areas for mutually supportive and non-duplicative implementation across relevant international instruments.

Japan, for ASIA, emphasized the importance of cross-coordination, in particular with the CBD, and urged keeping the GB fully informed of any relevant developments. Germany, for ERG, welcomed CBD Decision 16/2, underscoring that the CBD multilateral mechanism does not cover DSI subject to benefit-sharing under other instruments. They called for: an open-ended, multi-stakeholder workshop, organized by the CGRFA in partnership with the CBD and the Treaty, on the implications of Decision 16/2; continued cooperation with the CBD, ensuring coherence and avoiding duplication of work; and support to capacity-building activities on DSI/GSD generation and use.

Tunisia, for AFRICA, and Egypt, for NEAR EAST, pointed to the lack of an internationally agreed definition on DSI/GSD. They called upon recipients, including Article 15 institutions, to generate and publish DSI/GSD only after obtaining the explicit consent of the provider country, until DSI/GSD is addressed comprehensively under the Treaty.

AFRICA called for strong coordination to guarantee mutual supportiveness between the Treaty and the CBD, and urged reducing capacity gaps by addressing digital infrastructure, data generation, and research capacities. The NEAR EAST stressed that DSI/GSD should be treated as PGRFA, evoking mandatory benefit-sharing, and encouraged capacity-building, technology transfer, and cooperation to close capacity gaps. SOUTH AFRICA underscored that the Treaty's drafters acknowledged that information on genetic material cannot be separated from the resource, providing relevant references, including on the definition of genetic material in Treaty Article 2 (use of terms). They emphasized that terms such as "genomic information" and "genomic sequence" are established scientific terms, which can be used in the revised standard material transfer agreement (SMTA).

CAMEROON said the Treaty has the authority to develop a definition for DSI/GSD and warned about the risks of biopiracy, calling for addressing DSI/GSD under the Treaty. UGANDA cited Articles 31 and 32 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which provide for interpretation in accordance with the context and purpose of the treaty, arguing that this is a legal obligation. KENYA said DSI/GSD is an intrinsic derivative of PGRFA.

Stressing the need for coherence with the CBD, BRAZIL called for safeguarding open access while facilitating research and innovation with fair and equitable benefit-sharing. NIGER and ARGENTINA prioritized reducing capacity gaps between developed and developing countries regarding DSI.

IPC, supported by KENYA, warned that excluding DSI could undermine negotiations and result in "reforming a system that does not exist anymore." THIRD WORLD NETWORK criticized the double standard of rejecting addressing DSI in a multilateral setting while including it in bilateral data-sharing agreements. The UNIVERSITY OF LIEGE drew attention to a policy brief explaining how DSI falls within the Treaty's scope and should be included in the draft revised SMTA.

Chair Kopše pointed out that the topic relates to discussions on the MLS enhancement. Michael Ryan (Australia), Co-Chair of the contact group on the enhancement of the MLS, reported on progress, noting the need for further consultations. Chair Kopše invited the regions to bilateral meetings, to identify potential areas of compromise and consensus.

Contact Groups

Enhancement of the MLS: Delegates met in the morning to discuss payment rates and how to reach agreement on a balanced package of measures.

On rates for the subscription option, several Parties expressed support for 0.1% of the recipient's total seed sales, citing Norway's national practice and in line with CBD Decision 16/2. Others, stressing that the subscription option needs to remain attractive to the seed industry, proposed a rate of 0.01%. Some Parties expressed difficulty suggesting rates for the subscription option while discussions around the expansion of Annex I remain inconclusive.

On rates for the single access option, one region proposed a rate of 1% of product sales for products available with restriction for further research and breeding, and 0.1% for those available without restriction. One Party suggested simplifying the structure by removing the distinction with a rate of 1% for both.

A region expressed disagreement negotiating text for the expansion of Annex I to all PGRFA with national exemptions, noting it infringes upon national sovereignty and referencing UN General Assembly resolution 1803 (Permanent sovereignty over natural resources). Another region suggested, as a compromise, that the expansion should be done on a voluntary basis, with potential safeguards to ensure that new material will flow to the MLS. Several Parties agreed to use this proposal as a starting point to build compromises that will lead to a balanced package proposal.

Disagreements between regions remained on whether to include language regarding DSI/GSD in the SMTA. Delegates requested time for regional consultations and the Co-Chairs indicated that, with the GB Chair, they will engage regions in informal consultations, aiming to reach an agreement on a mutually agreeable balanced package to present to the plenary.

Farmers' Rights: The group resumed discussions on the draft strategy on how the use of the "[Options](#) for encouraging, guiding, and promoting the realization of farmers' rights" can be promoted, followed by a debate on the draft resolution.

On the draft strategy, a Party said they can approve it only if references to legal measures under category 10 of the "options" are excluded, arguing they ignore the benefits of plant variety protection for farmers. Some cautioned against reopening past decisions, while others emphasized the voluntary nature of the options and freedom to decide which ones to implement. Despite efforts to address the concerns through language in the draft resolution, delegates did not reach agreement.

Delegates discussed outcomes of the Second Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights to be included in the resolution, and the launch of a special programme entitled "Farmers' Rights in Action." The group decided to remove both references from the resolution and incorporate them into the terms of reference (ToRs) of the committee on farmers' rights. The group then engaged in a lengthy discussion over the possibility of establishing an international day of observance for farmers' rights, without reaching consensus.

Conservation and Sustainable Use: Co-Chairs Pesach Lubinsky (US), and Elizabeth Fernández Huaytalla (Peru) invited delegates to focus on a conference room paper containing, among other things: a draft resolution; the ToRs of a technical committee, with ongoing discussion on whether the committee will be an *ad hoc* or a standing one; a revised version of the mechanism to identify the status of implementation of Articles 5 and 6, and to support Parties based on specific contexts and needs; and revised draft voluntary guidelines to overcome the bottlenecks in the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA. Delegates addressed the ToRs of the committee. Following procedural challenges, they focused on the draft resolution. Discussions continued into the evening.

In The Corridors

As discussions on the enhancement of the MLS moved behind closed doors, issues related to DSI/GSD took center stage in plenary. While Parties debated, once again, whether DSI/GSD falls within the scope of the Treaty, an observer stressed that ensuring benefit-sharing from DSI/GSD is ultimately a matter of political will to address current inequities in research and development. Another opined that excluding DSI/GSD from the revised SMTA will condemn the Treaty to irrelevance and result in "reforming a system which does not exist anymore." Still, pointing to the ongoing bilateral consultations, some saw the light at the end of the tunnel, in the form of a limited reform that would enhance monetary benefit-sharing without radical changes to the current system.