



CGRFA-10 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2004

Delegates to the tenth regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-10) approved the future work of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITWG-PGR) and addressed the future work of the Commission.

FUTURE WORK OF THE ITWG-PGR

Delegates agreed that the ITWG-PGR should: advise on activities to support the work of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR) in relation to the Treaty's supporting components, and prepare an analysis on technical cooperation between the CGRFA and the Governing Body; provide guidance on monitoring the implementation of the Global Plan of Action (GPA) and the development of the report on the State of the World's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA); provide guidance on capacity-building initiatives to support PGRFA utilization through seed systems, plant breeding and genetic enhancement; receive information on the Svalbard seed storage facility; consider the development of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, and its relationship with FAO, the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and other processes; consider IPGRI's draft guidelines on unintended presence of transgenes in *ex situ* collections; provide guidance to the FAO on the research programme on markets as a means to access crop genetic services and conserve agricultural biodiversity; provide advice on enhancing efforts of relevant FAO departments to make information available to policy makers; and provide guidance to FAO on how to best support countries to generate, compile and disseminate cultivar-specific nutrient composition data to demonstrate the role of biodiversity in nutrition and food security.

FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Chair Eng-Siang Lim (Malaysia) invited views on the future work of the Commission, including on: preparing a multi-year programme of work (MYPOW); promoting synergies; streamlining the Commission's work; and providing options for the structure of future sessions of the Commission.

FAO's Inter-departmental Working Group on Biological Diversity for Food and Agriculture made a presentation on

mainstreaming agricultural biodiversity for food security. He outlined projects, including on the creation of community biodiversity registers, promotion of organic agriculture and development of a national agricultural biodiversity plan in Laos. He recommended that: a report on the State of the World's agricultural biodiversity should focus on ecosystem interaction among interdependent components of agricultural biodiversity; and the Commission should monitor and facilitate national programmes on agricultural biodiversity through case studies of policy reform, information exchange and technical reviews, as a core element of the MYPOW.

José Esquinas-Alcázar, CGRFA Secretary, underscored the urgent need to prevent genetic erosion and combat hunger through preserving agricultural biodiversity. Recalling some of FAO's major achievements, he emphasized the lack of involvement of the agricultural sector in the negotiation of binding environmental and trade agreements that impact on agriculture. He underlined the need for adopting an agro-ecosystem approach and for developing a MYPOW.

Many delegates supported preparation of a MYPOW and a roadmap for consideration at CGRFA-11. The Netherlands, on behalf of the European Community and its Member States (EU), stressed the need to integrate the Commission's goals into FAO's Medium-Term Plan. Malaysia, on behalf of ASIA, supported by many, urged implementation of activities on plant and animal genetic resources, and suggested that the Secretariat provide an overview of items relating to forestry, fishery and microbial genetic resources. Concerned about broadening the scope of work beyond capacities, AUSTRALIA gave highest priority to ITPGR implementation. The US and CANADA noted the need to go beyond ITPGR implementation, while keeping in mind the Commission's terms of reference, budget restrictions, and comprehensive management of FAO resources. With AUSTRALIA, they called for inter-sessional activities by the Bureau to assist the planning process. The US and CANADA also gave high priority to, *inter alia*: implementation of the GPA; coordination with the Governing Body of the ITPGR; and cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), particularly regarding the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. TURKEY prioritized addressing poverty alleviation and organic farming.

MALAYSIA stressed the need to analyze gaps in the CBD approach and focus on complementary activities. Angola,



on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, with NORWAY and URUGUAY, welcomed the agro-ecosystem approach. The AFRICAN GROUP also: stressed poverty and hunger eradication as a precondition for biodiversity conservation, and requested the Commission to focus on enabling activities; prioritized the application of science and technologies, technology transfer, and the development of the code of conduct on biotechnology; and, with TUNISIA, expressed concern that a broad MYPOW could prevent the development of integrated national strategies for agro-ecosystem management. NORWAY reiterated support to CGRFA's work on animal genetic resources and underlined the need for monitoring GPA implementation. On biotechnology, he prioritized national capacity building and development of guidelines preventing introgression of genetically modified materials into gene banks.

ECUADOR proposed establishing a new working group on agricultural genetic resources and cultural practices, and undertaking an international study on the quantification of the loss of genetic resources. BRAZIL highlighted a G-77 suggestion to continue work on the code of conduct on biotechnology. THAILAND, supported by the Philippines on behalf of ASIA, requested a study on avian influenza and its impact on genetic resources and food security.

IPGRI offered to contribute to developing the agro-ecosystem approach. The CBD welcomed the expansion of CGRFA's work to other genetic resources. The ACTION GROUP ON EROSION, TECHNOLOGY AND CONCENTRATION (ETC GROUP) emphasized the need to create a panel on farmers' and livestock keepers' rights, and suggested studying ways to facilitate indigenous participation. He also prioritized development of the code of conduct on biotechnology, stressing the need to address genetic contamination. The LEAGUE OF PASTORAL PEOPLE expressed concern that many issues raised by civil society organizations, such as livestock keepers' rights, have not been included in CGRFA's future work. He said that the demand for uniform grains by international food relief organizations undermines the rights of indigenous farmers to market their produce.

The EU urged focusing on short- and medium-term tasks, including: cooperation between the CGRFA and the ITPGR Governing Body; support to ITPGR implementation; synergies with other international bodies; ways to maintain PGRFA integrity in centres of origin and *ex situ* collections; and identification of gaps regarding forestry, fishery and microbial genetic resources. He identified long-term goals, including: poverty and hunger eradication; science applied to genetic resources; biodiversity contribution for sustainable development, food security and improved nutrition; and consideration of integrated agro-ecosystem management. Regarding procedural elements, he called for strengthening national and regional driven processes, FAO inter-sectoral cooperation and inter-sessional Bureau communication.

Chair Lim presented a summary of ideas, including that: the Secretariat should submit a MYPOW for consideration at CGRFA-11 and prepare an analysis of available FAO human and financial resources to support work on various genetic resource sectors; the priority should be to continue work on plant and animal genetic resources; the Commission needs to mobilize FAO resources; the Commission should support ITPGR

implementation and oversee cooperation with the CBD; and CGRFA-11 should consider a document on the status and needs of other sectors of genetic resources. He added that a document containing all country views expressed during the discussion would be annexed to his proposal, if accepted. Regional groups requested time to review the proposal.

In an evening session, the Commission was presented with the Chair's text, including textual amendments made by North America and Southwest Pacific on: taking into consideration the country views for the Commission's future work when developing the MYPOW; mobilizing funding from the FAO's regular programme budget; considering ways to make the Commission's operation more effective and efficient; establishing close cooperation of the Commission with the ITPGR Governing Body; requesting the Commission to oversee cooperation with the CBD; and further considering the annexed country views regarding prioritization of work on animal and plant genetic resources.

On MYPOW development, the EU suggested references to: cooperation with relevant services and departments of the FAO; assistance by the ITWG-PGR and the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources; and extending the Commission's work to other sectors of genetic resources. NORWAY also requested consideration of cross-sectorial aspects of genetic resources. The EU further suggested: strengthening work on plant and animal genetic resources at the national and regional level; matching priorities with available human and financial resources; and establishing inter-sessional communication among the Bureau and technical working groups' members. UGANDA and BRAZIL called for prioritizing animal over plant genetic resources.

Many developing countries emphasized that they are not ready to negotiate on new text, and called for further clarification on the process. Chair Lim established a contact group, composed of regional representatives, to reach a compromise.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As expected by many, the discussion on the future work of the Commission entailed a good number of complexities. Debate on Thursday morning was rich, and delegates enjoyed what they saw as an articulated exchange of views touching upon the entire meeting's agenda. When work resumed in the afternoon, many expressed surprise and disappointment to see a half-page Chair's text proposed for consensus approval, noting that it did not reflect their numerous suggestions. Yet, others said the text was a concise document, with the potential to move things forward.

An evening session, involving never-ending amendments and confusion on the procedure, left many delegates in a state of disconcertment. Nevertheless, some said that negotiations had gone reasonably well, considering the vastness of issues to be included and arranged in the Commission's first multi-year programme of work, and seemed optimistic in view of the expected outcome.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR

ENB SUMMARY REPORT: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary report of CGRFA-10 will be available on Monday, 15 November, for delegates to the second session of the Commission acting as the Interim Committee of the ITPGR, and online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cgrfa10/>