

CGRFA HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER

Delegates to the twelfth regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-12) continued to discuss issues relating to the multi-year programme of work (MYPOW), including the adoption of the Strategic Plan 2010-2017 for the implementation of the MYPOW. Delegates also discussed cooperation with other international instruments and organizations, and the Commission's mode of operation. In the evening, delegates met to further consider the Strategic Plan and policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA.

MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK:

POLICIES AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ABS: Chair Mozafari opened the morning plenary session noting that spokespersons from each region will meet in an unofficial lunchtime session to review and address the proposed text on policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA. In the afternoon, Vice-Chair Joel Rudinas (the Philippines) reported on the informal consultations, announcing that participants had reached agreement on the text. In the evening, delegates adopted a resolution on policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA.

ADOPTION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2017:

The Secretariat introduced the document on the adoption of the Strategic Plan 2010-2017 for the implementation of the MYPOW (CGRFA-12/09/4), which lays out the major outputs and milestones the Commission aims to achieve over its next five sessions. He noted that the Commission might wish to: consider the draft Strategic Plan with a view to its adoption; and underscore the importance of reviewing the Strategic Plan in subsequent sessions.

The ERG, AFRICA, Argentina on behalf of GRULAC, CANADA, ASIA, ECUADOR, AUSTRALIA and others welcomed the Strategic Plan. The ERG supported adoption of the Strategic Plan and noted that that while it is important to cooperate with international organizations the text should specify "where appropriate." AFRICA appealed to donors to prioritize support for genetic improvement plans for plants and animals for food and agriculture. Highlighting the document's mission statement, GRULAC suggested changing "exchange of GRFA" to "conservation and sustainable use of GRFA, and the fair access to the benefits of GRFA." CANADA supported the adoption of the draft Strategic Plan, and made a number of comments on its strategic goals and objectives, including on deleting the words "plant and animal" relating to the implementation of GPAs, as the Commission may facilitate the development of several other GPAs. ASIA asked for clarification on the recommendation to explore the establishment of a Trust Fund to enable participation of delegates from developing countries. GRULAC suggested replacing "enabling" with "inviting" participation. YEMEN and AUSTRALIA seconded the EU proposal to discuss GRFA as a whole and not just animal and plant GR. AUSTRALIA suggested further considering the

"Impact Focus Areas," "Organizational Results of the Strategic Framework" and Medium-Term Plan of FAO. The CGIAR, from an ecosystem perspective, welcomed the vision of the MYPOW and the Strategic Plan, with CANADA looking forward to the contribution of CGIAR. The INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS highlighted the role of organic farming for the sustainable use of biodiversity.

The Secretariat provided an evaluation of the FAO's Programme of Work and Budget, highlighting the way FAO is proposing to contribute to the MYPOW and Strategic Plan. The ERG, with ECUADOR and CANADA, asked the Secretariat to prepare for this session a detailed draft budget for the implementation of the MYPOW, indicating for each activity where financial resources would be drawn from. She emphasized that GRFA should be a priority for funding under the FAO's Regular Programme Budget and requested assurance that sufficient funds are available for MYPOW implementation. ECUADOR and CANADA noted that the Commission urgently needs a Secretary.

The Secretariat addressed concerns, emphasizing that the cross-sectoral nature of work on GRFA makes it very difficult to identify which FAO entity is contributing human and financial resources to which Organizational Result. He explained that in accordance with budgetary reform, FAO technical departments have a certain amount of time and resources allocated to work on GRFA, in addition to core voluntary and other voluntary contributions.

Assistant Director-General Müller, FAO, underscored that the FAO's reform process and a shift to results-based management means that budgeting procedures are in transition. He reassured members that the search for a new Secretary was underway, with news on the selection likely available by January 2010.

The ERG reiterated its request for clarification on budget and activities for the next biennium under the MYPOW, and expressed concern about the high dependence on extra-budgetary resources. ECUADOR noted that the financial situation of the Commission has become uncertain due to reliance on voluntary contributions and stressed that the priority must be implementation of the Strategic Plan in full and not just in part. AFRICA, supported by the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC, called on the Commission to make sure that developing countries be enabled to prepare status reports on GRFA, which provide the basis for implementation of policies and standards. Delegates agreed to language in the Strategic Plan on how the Commission should halt the loss of GRFA, to the effect that world food security and sustainable development should be ensured by promoting "sustainable use and conservation, including their exchange." SWITZERLAND, supported by the CGIAR, highlighted the unique features of GRFA and countries' interdependence, which make the issue of exchange relevant. CANADA proposed deleting the reference to "global information system" in support of the preparation of global assessments but agreed to referencing "global information

system, as appropriate,” consistent with the language in the Commission’s Statutes. Delegates agreed to delete the reference to “plant and animal” GRFA in favor of a holistic definition of GRFA. Delegates struggled, however, to agree on compromise language on the timetable for the Strategic Plan.

In the afternoon, delegates reviewed and agreed to the indicative timetables and processes for: AnGR, with SWITZERLAND suggesting referencing an “international collaboration platform” rather than an “international collaboration network”; aquatic genetic resources, with CANADA noting the need to strengthen cooperation with the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Informal Working Group of the General Assembly to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; FGR, with the US underscoring the need to reflect that the establishment of the ITWG-FGR has been agreed; for micro-organisms and invertebrates, with ERG proposing deletion of the consideration of establishment of an *ad hoc* advisory group or another form of subsidiary body.

On cross-sectoral matters, delegates discussed timetables and processes for: the application and integration of biotechnologies in the conservation and utilization of GRFA, with CANADA and IRAN supporting additional text on cooperation with national research organizations on these matters.

In the evening, plenary completed consideration of the Strategic Plan’s timetables. Discussions focused, *inter alia*, on whether to consider internalization of the ecosystem approach at every session, and on the need for country reports on biodiversity for food and agriculture. The ERG mentioned the importance of climate change as a cross-sectoral matter, and proposed conducting a scoping study for the next CGRFA session. On cooperation with international organizations on ABS for GRFA, the ERG proposed to add a reference to cooperation between the Commission and the ITPGR.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

COOPERATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: The Secretariat presented: the draft joint statement for cooperation between the Governing Body (GB) of the ITPGR and the CGRFA; a document on cooperation with the ITPGR, the GCDT and the CGIAR; and submissions from international organizations (CGRFA-12/09/18, 19, Inf.6 and Inf.6 Add.1). Shakeel Bhatti, ITPGR Executive Secretary, reported on outcomes from the third session of the GB of relevance to cooperation with the Commission, as set out in GB Resolution 7/2009.

All regions and others recommended adoption of the joint statement. AFRICA welcomed Resolution 7/2009, and the ERG asked that it be annexed to the joint statement. CANADA, with BRAZIL and SWITZERLAND, proposed accepting the invitations for cooperation extended in the resolution instead, including cooperation related to FAO Reform.

On cooperation with the ITPGR, GCDT and CGIAR, AUSTRALIA supported the recommendations contained in the relevant document. AFRICA welcomed preparation by the CGRFA and ITPGR Secretariats of a vision paper with the aim of facilitating policy coherence and complementarity. The ERG suggested that the vision paper be ready in time for CGRFA-13 and GB-4, and that it should also address the GPA, information systems and technical tools. CANADA said that eventually all sectoral matters on PGRFA should primarily be addressed by the ITPGR with the CGRFA addressing cross-sectoral matters. He, with KENYA, emphasized that the GCDT and the CGIAR are major players in the sector. BRAZIL recommended that the new governance process underway in the CGIAR strengthen GR conservation to promote crop diversity and breeding strategies.

GCDT highlighted the important role of the Trust as an essential element of the ITPGR’s Funding Strategy to ensure the preservation and availability of PGRFA and welcomed collaboration with the CGRFA.

COOPERATION WITH THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: The Secretariat introduced documents on cooperation with the CBD and the Joint Work Plan (CGRFA-12/09/20 and Inf. 8), noting that: the aim of the Plan is to enhance synergies between the two Secretariats; it covers the time period until 2011; and provides the basis for further cooperation. BRAZIL, AFRICA, the ERG, and others welcomed the preparation of the Joint Work Plan and proposed to take note of it, but considered its adoption premature at this session given the late arrival of the document. AFRICA, supported by the ERG, the PHILIPPINES and others, agreed with the five areas of interest for collaboration between the Secretariats and the identification of further areas, including ABS. PRACTICAL ACTION asked the Secretariat to facilitate the inclusion of civil society organizations in activities leading up to the *SOW on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*.

THE COMMISSION’S MODE OF OPERATION

THE STATUS OF THE COMMISSION: The Secretariat introduced document (CGRFA-12/09/22), which considers options and implications for changing the status of the Commission, and provided details on the differences between Article VI bodies, such as the CGRFA, and Article XIV bodies, such as the ITPGR GB. The FAO Legal Office discussed enhancing the status of the Commission to a governing body, emphasizing that the legal counsel has no position on the matter. He explained that raising the Commission’s status would require an amendment to FAO’s Constitution and to the general rules of the organization, and noted concerns that such a change could re-open the issue of implementing the FAO’s Immediate Plan of Action.

GRULAC questioned how a change to the legal status of the Commission would affect the Commission in practice. He also, with the ERG and DENMARK, asked the Secretariat to conduct a thorough analysis of the constraints and advantages of changing the Commission’s status, for consideration at the Commission’s next session. Noting support for raising the Commission’s status, CANADA emphasized the need to examine alternative opportunities and opposed a final decision on the issue being made at the upcoming Conference. On PGR, delegates discussed the development of “higher order indicators” for genetic erosion and genetic vulnerability to monitor implementation of the updated GPA, once adopted.

The Secretariat announced that the draft final report of the meeting will be made available in all languages on Friday around 4 pm. Friday’s plenary will start at 5 pm, for adoption of the report.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Delegates returned on Thursday to forge ahead on the agenda’s final issues before Friday’s adoption of the report. Discussions moved forward efficiently, and were given added impetus in the afternoon by the announcement, to applause, that unofficial lunchtime consultations had resulted in clean text on policies and arrangements for ABS for GRFA. One participant in the consultations said that “a great spirit of compromise” had prevailed, no doubt helped by the painstaking work all delegates had invested over the previous nights in seeking common ground. The end result is a succinct message destined for the CBD COP and ABS-WG that retains much of the earlier text’s substance. A delegate quipped, “Let’s send it to the CBD on a postcard!” But many people were bothered by the same nagging question: Where was the CBD presence at this meeting? “Everything turned out fine,” said one delegate, “but a positive signal from the CBD during these negotiations would have been helpful.”

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The Earth Negotiations Bulletin summary and analysis of CGRFA-12 will be available on Monday, 26 October 2009 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cgrfa12/>