

CGRFA 13 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2011

Delegates met in plenary in the morning to consider: cooperation with international instruments, conventions and organizations; status and profile of the Commission; election of Chairs and Vice-Chairs; and aquatic genetic resources.

The Contact Group on the Global Plan of Action (GPA) for PGRFA met in the afternoon and evening to finalize the GPA.

PLENARY

COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS: Delegates considered CGRFA-13/11/22. ECUADOR, supported by the NEAR EAST, requested the Secretariat to ensure all relevant documents are translated into the UN languages, in particular the report from the Global Crop Diversity Trust.

The ERG, commended: the collaborative work with the ITPGR Governing Body and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); the work of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in the context of updating gene banks; and the role of the Global Crop Diversity Trust for germplasm collections. The GLOBAL CROP DIVERSITY TRUST (the Trust) underscored collaborative work on GRFA undertaken for GPA implementation, including in developing *in situ* and *ex situ* collections. She said the updated GPA should be brought into prominence in the Commission and other relevant bodies, highlighting the GPA's role as a coherent framework of global priorities for GRFA management, including in the assessment of the commitments foreseen by the ITPGR and the GPA.

PRACTICAL ACTION called for enhancing interaction and participation of civil society in the Commission's work. The ETC GROUP suggested reviewing and enhancing the relationship between the Commission, the ITPGR, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and the Trust. On cooperation with UNFCCC and WIPO, she expressed concern over the "gene-giants" requesting recognition of intellectual property rights over "climate-ready crops," noting this could undermine food security and countries' sovereignty and infringe the ITPGR's provisions, calling for a legal assessment of these questions.

BIOVERSITY INTERNATIONAL highlighted the CGIAR research programme on climate change, agriculture and food security involving the CGIAR centers, as a source for the development of a road map for addressing climate change and GRFA under the Commission. The SOUTHWEST PACIFIC highlighted efforts to conserve gene bank collections in the region in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. IRAN expressed concern that the initial expectation that the Trust would be an integral part of the ITPGR was not fully met, and called for ensuring close collaboration between both entities.

STATUS AND PROFILE OF THE COMMISSION: The Secretariat introduced document CGRFA-13/11/23 outlining three options for raising the Commission's status: transform the Commission into an FAO Technical Committee reporting directly to the FAO Council and Conference; maintain its status and continue reporting directly to the FAO Council and Conference, as appropriate; or maintain its status and report to the FAO Council and Conference through the Technical Committees. He noted that transforming the Commission into a Technical Committee could be an arduous process and that the Commission currently has a *de facto* direct reporting line to the Council and the Conference based on an invitation by the Conference.

All speakers favored the second option, with several noting that the Commission's profile does not depend on its status, but the quality of its expertise. AUSTRALIA noted that transforming the Commission into a Technical Committee could reduce the Commission's independence. GRULAC suggested reforming the Commission's statutes to streamline decision-making.

AQUATIC GENETIC RESOURCES: Delegates considered revised text on aquatic genetic resources. GRULAC requested further time to review the text and discuss it with regional colleagues.

OTHER MATTERS: Date and venue of the CGRFA 14: The Secretariat announced that CGRFA 14 is tentatively scheduled for the last week of April 2013 in view of the need for the meeting documentation to be available for reporting to the FAO Conference later in the year.

Election of Chair and Vice-chairs: Delegates elected: Brad Fraleigh (Canada) as Chair of CGRFA 14 and, as Vice-chairs: Elzbieta Martyniuk (Poland) for the ERG; Modesto Fernández (Cuba) for GRULAC; Raj Patil (Australia) for the Southwest Pacific; Javad Mozafari Hashjin (Iran) for the Near East; and Tashi Yangzome Dorji (Bhutan) for Asia. AFRICA offered to submit their nomination on Friday. Delegates then nominated representatives to the ITWGs on PGRFA and animal and forest genetic resources, as well as the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on ABS.

The NEAR EAST requested increasing its representation to the Commission's Bureau and Working Groups from three to five, before making nominations. Chair Mozafari advised that, based on consultations with the Secretariat and its legal office, the two possible ways to recognize the Near East's request would be: the Commission to agree to the request at the meeting; or the Commission to suggest that further time be allocated for the Secretariat to study the issue with a view to reviewing it at CGRFA 14. He noted that the current quota of three representatives for the region is not proportionate to its number of members, and suggested to request increasing representation to four members, noting that an increase to five would call into question the level of representation from other regions.

SWITZERLAND emphasized that the issue has implications for other groups, and proposed this be considered at CGRFA 14. AFRICA requested clarification on the criteria for determining the number of representatives per region.

CONTACT GROUP

On Thursday afternoon, the GPA contact group discussed the role and importance of the Treaty's Benefit-sharing Fund to the GPA, debating whether or not the GPA should have a separate funding strategy. Noting that the Benefit-sharing Fund has received contributions of US\$10 million, some questioned the relevance of yet another funding strategy, while others asserted that the GPA needs its own dedicated funds. Some expressed confusion over whether or not the Benefit-sharing Fund could only support Annex 1 crops; it was later clarified that the Fund was for all crops, including under-utilized ones.

After going through the text that had not been addressed by the ITWG on PGRFA, delegates revisited outstanding text in the entire document. Delegates preferred referring to "stakeholders" instead of "rural people" or "farmer breeders." On a paragraph dealing with the establishment of information systems to identify and obtain appropriate germplasm for reintroduction, delegates addressed an outstanding proposal referring to the provision of arrangements for repatriation of PGRFA. Some regional groups supported reference to "repatriation," while another group suggested, and delegates eventually agreed, to refer to "reintroduction and restoration".

Delegates further agreed that the name for the priority area should be "sustainable use of PGRFA" instead of "sustainable use." Negotiations continued into the evening.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As the final day of the CGRFA13 approached, the spirit of compromise penetrated the halls of FAO, with discussions converging towards agreement on the most relevant issues. Delegates started to get ready for the Friday's afternoon final Plenary and planned to make the most of their remaining time in wonderful Rome, except for those delegates struggling to address the more than 60 pages of text on the GPA update. What kept them locked up in the Red Room were all too familiar debates around funding. Confusion seemed to be another cause for delay, as some parties were unclear on whether those countries that are members of the Commission, but not parties to the Treaty, would have access to funding from the ITPGR Benefit-sharing Fund.

As many delegates noted, the spirit of compromise and conciliation also seemed to surround informal consultations at lunchtime on how to address biotechnology under the MYPOW. One delegate highlighted: "While some parties and the recommendations from the Commission's Technical Working Groups proposed addressing biotechnology under each sector-specific issue in the MYPOW, others preferred having a more strengthened component on biotechnology." One satisfied veteran negotiator added: "we finally got to a middle-ground solution and agreed to include biotechnology as a sectoral milestone that would foresee the review of the work of the Commission Working Groups on biotechnology for GRFA."

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of CGRFA 13 will be available on Monday, 25 July 2011 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cgrfa13/>

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