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"Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development"

ANNEX 5

Inputs by

Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture promotes and facilitates the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use for sustainable agriculture and food security, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

It is an FAO legally binding international agreement that deals with the management of PGRFA, and its Governing Body provides policy guidance to achieve its full implementation through an effective and functioning framework. As of February 2020, the Treaty has 146 Contracting Parties.

Conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA are essential to achieving sustainable agriculture and food security, for present and future generations, indispensable for crop genetic improvement to adapting to unpredictable environmental changes and human needs. Because countries are interdependent in their reliance on PGRFA and the management of PGRFA is at the meeting point between agriculture, the environment and commerce, the International Treaty has established a multilateral system that facilitates continuous exchange of PGRFA (Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing).

Through Resolution 1/2017, the Governing Body of the Treaty emphasized that the effective implementation of the International Treaty contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG Targets 2.5 and 15.6, relating to conservation, and access and benefit-sharing of genetic resources, while also contributing indirectly to SDGs 1, 12, 13 and 17.

I. Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

a. Critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda within the area of responsibility of the intergovernmental body

Launched in February 2019 by the FAO, **the State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture**¹ reports that biodiversity for food and agriculture is declining. It notes that **crop diversity in farmers’ fields has been declining in rate and amount**, while threats to it are increasing. Of some 6,000 plant species gathered or cultivated for food, fewer than 200

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3129EN/ca3129en.pdf>

contribute substantially to global food output and only nine account for 66 percent of total crop production.

The Treaty's Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing provides a unique mechanism for Contracting Parties and its stakeholders **to facilitate access to the plant resources needed to breed crops adapted to environmental and socioeconomic changes and contributing to a more diversified agriculture.** The **Benefit-sharing Fund** is an essential element of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing and the Funding Strategy of the Treaty. Established by the Governing Body and operational since 2009, the Benefit-sharing Fund has invested more than USD 26 million to sustain resilient livelihoods and enhance adaptation measures for farmers in developing countries through the conservation and management of agricultural biodiversity, thus contributing to the achievement of SDG 2 (Targets 2.3, 2.4 2.5) and 13. Many family farmers have benefited from increased availability and facilitated access to a wider range of seeds that are adapted to local needs, taste better and have higher nutritional value. This enables farmers to grow different types of crops that have higher yields and are more resilient to pests, diseases and adverse climate conditions thus enabling adaptation and resilient livelihoods, as well as income generation and availability of highly nutritious food.

According to the report submitted to the Governing Body of the Treaty for its Eighth Session, in November 2019, regarding the implementation of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, **2.2 million plant genetic resources for food and agriculture were available for research, training and breeding.** The report also provided insights about **more than 5.3 million samples of PGRFA transferred with the Standard Material Transfer Agreement** and reported. Only five crops accounted for 84 per cent of all material transferred and above one fourth referred to material under development.

Also, according to the report on the implementation of the **Global Information System** of the International Treaty, submitted to the Eighth Session of the Governing Body, **about 775,562 PGRFA had detailed online information.** As much as 17 per cent of these materials were available in the Multilateral System. It is also well recognized today that advanced genetic, genomic and related technologies will be making a huge impact on breeding and conservation of plant genetic resources. Large amounts of PGRFA data are already generated with more precision. These advances could enormously improve our capacity to characterize and evaluate genetic resources and reduce the time of breeding periods, and thus have the potential to contribute to the improvement in food and nutrition security at a time of climate change.

However, some concerns have also been raised about the possible adverse impacts of new and emerging genetic and related technologies as well as other systemic issues connected to them. Most notable is the capacity gap between countries and regions to obtain, utilize and regulate the use of those technologies and concomitant knowledge and economic divide. Another important aspect, especially in relation to the Multilateral System, is how information generated by or through those technologies are treated, managed and utilized.

A critical gap identified by the Governing Body of the Treaty is the **need to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System so that its genepool expands,** more types of crops

and genetic resources are exchanged across the world and the benefit-sharing arising from the use of genetic resources is increased in a more predictable and sustainable manner. In adopting Resolution 1/2017 on the contribution of the Treaty to the achievement of the Agenda 2030, the Governing Body called for rapid finalization of the elements for the enhancement of the Multilateral System. During the current biennium, the Governing Body has encouraged informal consultations among Contracting Parties and especially national consultations amongst sectors and relevant stakeholders on the enhancement of the Multilateral System.

b. Priority measures to: accelerate action, and ensure transformative pathways to realize the decade of action for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

At its Eighth Session, held in November 2019, the Governing Body adopted a **Funding Strategy of the International Treaty for the period 2020 to 2025** in order to enhance the availability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the provision of financial resources to implement activities under this Treaty. It decided to establish, within the Funding Strategy, a target of **USD \$0.9-1.1 billion per year over a period of 10 years with** a milestone of 40% to be achieved by 2026 to support the implementation of the International Treaty through a wide range of sources and channels.

The Governing Body provided, among other things, the following policy recommendations related to the implementation of the International Treaty, and especially the operation of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing and implementation of the Funding Strategy:

- Appeals to both Contracting Parties, and natural and legal persons to make PGRFA that are fully characterized and evaluated available in the Multilateral System;
- Invites Contracting Parties and other holders of material to use, on a voluntary basis, the Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) of the Global Information System for the identification of material available in the Multilateral System;
- Acknowledges the importance of expanding the coverage of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing to further facilitate access and exchange of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and thereby increase the global effort to conserve and sustainably use these resources;
- Encourages Contracting Parties to implement the International Treaty through their **national policies, strategies and programmes, and to enhance integration of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in national development plans, national budgets and priorities for donor support and external funding**, taking into account national legislation;
- Strongly **supports collaborations and the continued development of partnerships** among Contracting Parties and different stakeholders, especially in information sharing, technology transfer and capacity building, as essential to achieve full implementation of the International Treaty.

II. Contribution of the intergovernmental body to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda within its area of responsibility

The finalization of the negotiations to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing will directly contribute to accelerating progress on the achievement of the SDG Target 15.6, to promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed. It would also contribute to the achievement of other SDGs, particularly SDG 2 (hunger eradication and sustainable agriculture), resilience to Climate (SDG 13).

Through its policy making processes, the Governing Body continues to bring various relevant stakeholders together across borders and sectors, to strengthen the operation of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing and provide incentives and benefit-sharing measures to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.

It also calls for better multistakeholder international cooperation, especially for capacity development. In encouraging and promoting partnerships, a greater focus would be placed on benefit sharing, especially information sharing, technology transfer and dissemination, and capacity building.

III. Selected recommendations for accelerating progress and moving on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action, for possible use in drafting the HLPF declaration.

Give national priority to the conservation, availability and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture especially with a view to ensuring that farmers can continue to conserve and sustainably use PGRFA in a changing climate.

Encourage cooperation among countries and different stakeholders, including the private sector, to maintain and expand the effective functioning of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, with a view to increasing the benefit-sharing arising from the use of genetic resources in a predictable and sustainable manner.