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**REVIEW OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES ON AGRICULTURAL BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**Note by the Executive Secretary**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. This Note provides the first report on progress made in the implementation of decision III/11 by Parties and Governments and by international and regional organisations and bodies. This Note has been prepared with contributions from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.
2. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP), at its first meeting in 1994, decided to consider “the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity within the context of the Convention’s three objectives and its provisions.”
3. Decision II/1 of the second meeting of the COP took note of the report of the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) in which the SBSTTA, in its Recommendation I/2 proposed to provide to the COP “advice on scientific, technical and technological aspects of the conservation of agricultural biological diversity and sustainable use of its components (also taking into account the other provisions in Article 25 (2)).
4. Under its decision II/15, “recognising the special nature of agricultural biodiversity, its distinctive features and problems needing distinctive solutions”, the COP considered that outstanding matters concerning plant genetic resources should be resolved as soon as possible within the Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The COP further declared its support for the process engaged in the FAO Commission on Plant Genetic Resources (now the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture - CGRFA), especially the convening of the Fourth International Technical

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Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture through which the first report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources and rolling Global Plan of Action (GPA) were being developed through a country-driven process, and the implementation of FAO Conference Resolution 7/93 for the adaptation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to comply with the recommendation in Resolution 3 of the Nairobi Final Act and in Chapter 14 of Agenda 21 to strengthen the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

5. Under its decision II/16, the COP adopted a statement to the Fourth International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources and requested that the outcome of the Conference be presented to the third meeting of the COP, as well as the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPA) and the report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources.

6. At its second meeting, the SBSTTA considered agricultural biological diversity in light of document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/10 on this item. The conclusions of this consideration are contained in Recommendation II/7 (see UNEP/CBD/COP/3/3).

7. In recognition of the importance that Governments assign to agricultural biological diversity, and drawing upon Recommendation II/7 of the SBSTTA, the third meeting of the COP considered this topic as a priority item. To assist it in its consideration of this item, the COP had before it a Note by the Executive Secretary, *Consideration of Agricultural Biological Diversity under the Convention on Biological Diversity* (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/14), a *Progress Report on the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* submitted by FAO (UNEP/CBD/ COP/3/15), as well as a number of information documents.

8. Consideration of these matters, led to the adoption by COP-III of decision III/11, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Agricultural Biological Diversity, and the agreement that this item be addressed systematically and in phases, as part of the COP's medium-term programme of work.

9. In this decision (paragraph 1), the Conference of the Parties decided to develop a multi-year programme of activities on agricultural biological diversity aiming to promote:

- The positive effects and mitigate the negative impacts of agricultural practices on biological diversity in agricultural-ecosystems and their interface with other ecosystems;
- The conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources of actual or potential value for food and agriculture; and
- The fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

10. In support of the implementation of ongoing or the initiation of new policies, programmes and plans in the

field of agricultural biodiversity, the COP further agreed on the components to be included in the multi-year work programme:

- a) The identification and assessment of relevant ongoing activities and existing instruments at the international level;
- b) The identification and assessment of relevant ongoing activities and existing instruments at the national level;
- c) The identification of issues that need to be addressed and relevant knowledge;
- d) The identification of priority issues for further development of the programme;
- e) The identification and implementation of case studies on issues identified;
- f) The sharing of experiences and the transfer of knowledge and technologies.

11. Welcoming the offer by FAO to continue serving countries in implementing the Convention in the area of agricultural biological diversity, and underlining the necessity of avoiding duplication of work with respect to activities being undertaken by the FAO in this programme of work, the COP invited the assistance and contributions of Parties and of FAO, in close collaboration with other relevant UN bodies and regional and international organisations, in the identification, assessment and reporting with a view to establishing the multi-year work programme (paragraphs 1-7)

12. The COP further requested the Executive Secretary, in close collaboration with FAO, as appropriate, to report the results of the initiatives undertaken by Parties and by the FAO, in line with paragraphs 1-6 of the decision, together with advice from the SBSTTA, as a basis for the COP to set priorities for further work within the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity (paragraph 7). It instructed the SBSTTA to co-ordinate and assess the lessons learned from work by Parties and by relevant international and regional organisations and bodies on the two initial issues for conducting case studies, as identified by the SBSTTA in Recommendation II/7 and to report back thereon to the COP, as appropriate (paragraph 12).

13. Accordingly, the Executive Secretary invited Parties and Governments, on 4 February 1997, to report to the COP, through the SBSTTA, on their identification and assessment of relevant ongoing activities and existing instruments and on their identification of issues and priorities that need to be addressed at the national level, taking into consideration the thematic areas in Annex 2. In response, three country reports on agricultural biological diversity have been received to date, from Canada, Latvia and the United States of America, respectively. A number of other interim communications have also been received. A compilation of the contributions received will be provided to the SBSTTA for information in document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf. 9.

14. Parties were also invited to conduct case studies on pollinators and soil micro-organisms in agriculture, the two initial issues identified by SBSTTA-II, to co-ordinate and assess the lessons learnt from the work done on these topics and to report back to the COP through the SBSTTA, as appropriate (Recommendation II/7 and decision III/11, Annex 3). In this regard, where Parties and Governments are requesting support to assist them in carrying out assessments and /or conducting appropriate case studies, attention is drawn to the financial mechanisms that are in place for the Convention, in accordance with the guidance given in decision III/5.

15. The Executive Secretary also wrote to the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), to invite FAO, in close collaboration with other relevant United Nations bodies and

regional and international organisations, to identify and assess relevant ongoing activities and existing instruments on agricultural biological diversity at the international level and to report back to the COP. In carrying out the identification and assessment FAO was requested to choose among the thematic areas in Annex II of decision III/11 and to report back, through the SBSTTA, to the COP on a phased basis.

16. The Executive Secretary has received the first *Report of FAO on its Activities and Instruments related to COP decision III/11*, which is duly contained in Part II of this Note which the Executive Secretary has prepared to assist the SBSTTA in its consideration of this item on agricultural biological diversity. This Note constitutes the first report on progress made in the implementation of decision III/11 by Parties and Governments and by international and regional organisations and bodies.

17. To provide a better appreciation of the progress made in laying the groundwork for future implementation of decision III/11, FAO has also provided the following information documents, the first of which includes the contributions provided, to date, by other regional and international organizations and bodies:

- UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf. 6, *Reports from International Organizations on their Policies, Programmes and Activities on Agricultural Biological Diversity (CGRFA-7/97/7 Parts I, II, III and Add. 1)*;
- UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf. 7, Part I, *Report from FAO on its Policies, Programmes, and Activities on Agricultural Biological Diversity (CGRFA-7/97/8.1 & 8.2)* and Part II, *Progress Report on the Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-7/97/3)*;
- UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf. 8, *Report of the 7th Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-7/97 Rep)*.

18. In addition, the Executive Secretary has provided two further information documents: the first is a compilation, summarised by the Secretariat, from country contributions on agricultural biological diversity; the second, the report of the FAO-CBD Secretariat consultations and workshop, has been prepared jointly:

- UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf. 9, *Compilation of contributions by Parties on Agricultural Biological Diversity*; and,
- UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf. 10, *Report of the Joint FAO-CBD Secretariat Technical Consultations and Workshop, Rome 16-20 June, 1977*.

19. In line with Article 6 and 8 and the need to integrate national biodiversity strategies, programmes and plans into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies, and on the basis of SBSTTA Recommendation II/7, the COP considered the contributions of the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity to be a key focal area within the context of terrestrial, freshwater and marine

biological diversity (decision III/11, final preambular paragraph). In this regard, for consideration of this Note, the attention of the SBSTTA is also drawn to the following documents that have been prepared for its third meeting and which are of particular relevance to the work programme on agricultural biological diversity:

- UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/2, *Biological Diversity of Inland Waters*;
- UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/3, *Report on the implementation of the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism in facilitating and promoting technical and scientific cooperation*;
- UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/5, *Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice on Forest Biological Diversity taking account research and technical priorities identified*; UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/8, *Methodologies for the Assessment of Biological Diversity in Inland Water Ecosystems*.

## II. PROGRESS REPORT OF FAO ON ITS ACTIVITIES AND INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO DECISION III/11

### 2.1 Introduction

20. Decision III/11 “*requests* the Executive Secretary to invite the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in close collaboration with other relevant United Nations bodies and regional and international organizations, to identify and assess relevant ongoing activities and existing instruments at the international level, choosing among the thematic areas in the indicative list in Annex 2. The results should be reported back on a phased basis to the Conference of the Parties through the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice”.

21. The decision further “*welcomes* the offer by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to continue serving countries in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in the area of agricultural biological diversity, and, referring to its earlier decisions, underlines the necessity of avoiding any duplication of work with respect to the activities being undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in this program of work”.

22. The Executive Secretary extended the COP's invitation under decision III/11 to FAO by letter of 15 April 1997 to the Director-General of the Organization. On 12 May 1997, FAO informed the Executive Secretary that it had put in place a process to meet its request in line with the objectives of decision III/11. The purpose of the present report is to make available to the CBD Secretariat the results of FAO's assessment of its own activities and instruments germane to the decision with a view to laying the groundwork for subsequent, phased reporting including the activities and instruments of other organizations at regional and international levels, the approach to which is described, (see paragraphs 34-35).

### 2.2 Cooperation between the COP and FAO on Agricultural Biological Diversity

23. Decision II/15 of COP II “recognized the special nature of agricultural biodiversity, its distinctive features and problems needing distinctive solutions”, and declared its support for the process engaged in by the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to respond to Resolution 3 of the Nairobi Final Act, “Inter-relationship between the CBD and the promotion of sustainable agriculture.” This resolution, adopted together with the Convention in 1992, urged “that ways and means should be explored to develop complementarity and cooperation” between the

Convention and the framework established by the FAO Commission<sup>1</sup>; it specifically recognized the need to seek solutions to outstanding issues regarding agricultural biodiversity within this framework.

<sup>24</sup> In following up on these decisions, a number of measures have been taken by both the FAO governing bodies and the FAO Secretariat:

a) By Resolution 7/93, the 1993 FAO Conference launched an inter-governmental negotiating process, through the Commission, to seek solutions to outstanding issues identified in Resolution 3 of the Nairobi Final Act:

- “for the adaptation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- for consideration of the issue of access on mutually agreed terms to plant genetic resources, including *ex situ* collections not addressed by the Convention;<sup>2</sup> as well as,
- for the issue of realization of Farmers’ Rights”.

b) The 1995 FAO Conference broadened the Commission’s mandate to cover all components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture, by Resolution 3/95. Conference considered that this “would allow the Organisation to deal in a more integrated manner with agricultural biodiversity matters”, “stressed the importance of an integrated approach and full co-operation with the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and recognised ... that the broadened Commission would facilitate such co-operation”. In adopting new statutes for the Commission, provision was made for the Commission, “subject to approval by the Governing Bodies of FAO, as appropriate, to respond to requests from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in the specific area of genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture”.

c) The FAO Secretariat also agreed to second an agricultural biodiversity officer to the Secretariat of the COP, to promote co-operation in developing activities on agricultural biological diversity. As reported in paragraphs 43-44, discussions have also been held between the secretariats of the two organizations, with the aim of developing a joint work programme on agricultural biodiversity.

### 2.3 Establishment of the Multi-year Programme of Activities on Agricultural Biodiversity

25. Decision III/11 “Welcomes the offer by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to continue serving countries in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in the area of agricultural biological diversity, and, referring to its earlier decisions, underlines the necessity of avoiding any duplication of work with respect to the activities being undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in this programme of work”.

26. The Third Extraordinary Session of the Commission, in December 1996, in considering decision III/11 stressed the importance of FAO’s continued collaboration with the COP, and welcomed the close working relationship being developed between the FAO Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Convention. The Commission “stressed the importance of the ongoing cooperation between the two Secretariats in implementing decision III/11 of the Conference

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1 While still the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources

2 It should be noted that this formulation, adopted after careful negotiations, although limited to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, is not limited only to *ex situ* collections not addressed by the Convention.

of the Parties, which established a multi-year work programme on agricultural biodiversity”, and “*recommended* that FAO’s monitoring and reporting activities in the area of agricultural biodiversity should be consistent with and complementary to those for reporting to the Convention”.

#### 2.4 Strengthening of the CBD Secretariat

27. The capacity of the CBD Secretariat to address the development of the multi-year programme of work on agricultural biological diversity has been strengthened by FAO’s secondment, for a period of two years from February 1997, of a full-time professional officer, in the context of cooperation between the two secretariats, with special responsibility for agricultural biological diversity and development of a joint programme of work. FAO is the first United Nations specialized agency to provide such direct assistance to the CBD Secretariat.

#### 2.5 Revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources

28. Decision III/11 “Recognizes that several issues require further work in the context of the FAO Global System for the Conservation and Utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in particular: financing; the realisation of Farmers’ Rights as discussed in the Global Plan of Action; as well as terms of technology transfer to developing countries and access and benefit-sharing arrangements, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Convention. In this regard, calls for effective and speedy completion of the revision of the International Undertaking and strengthening of the FAO Global System”.

29. Progress in these negotiations, which began at the Commission’s First Extraordinary Session (7-11 November 1994), and continued during the Sixth Regular Session (19-30 June 1995), was reported to Meetings of the COP. COP II declared its support for this process, through decision II/15.

30. Since COP III, the Seventh Regular Session of the CGRFA (15-23 May 1997) has continued these negotiations, concentrating on the Articles concerning Scope, Access and Farmers’ Rights. In its report (CGRFA-7/97 Rep.) which is available as Document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/Inf. 8, the Commission:

“recognized the significant progress, and the constructive interactions among the regions that had taken place during the session, which had created good conditions to move forward, having in mind the major importance of the conservation and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their utilization, in assuring global food security. The Regions considered that the negotiations during this Session had provided a much better understanding of each others’ positions. The need for high-level political involvement in the negotiating process was highlighted”.

31. The Commission “agreed that priority in its future work programme should be given to the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking”, in the forthcoming biennium., and that “an extraordinary session of the Commission should therefore be held to rapidly progress negotiations on the International Undertaking”. FAO will, as requested, report to COP IV on the outcome of the negotiations held before then.

32. The CBD Secretariat addressed both the Third Extraordinary and the Seventh Regular Sessions of the Commission, and informed it of the key decisions of COP III that were of direct relevance to the ongoing process for the negotiations, noting that decision III/11 called for the effective and speedy completion of the revision of the International Undertaking and strengthening of the FAO Global System. Referring to the COP's recognition of the importance of co-operation between the CBD and FAO, and noting the complementarity of their mandates and work programmes, the Commission was informed of ongoing efforts to strengthen and render more effective such co-operation.

33. The CBD Secretariat also informed the Commission of the COP's decision to establish the multi-year programme of activities on agricultural biodiversity, and its aims. Particular attention was drawn to the encouragement given to Parties and Governments to develop national strategies, programmes and policies for the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity. It was noted that funding for such national activities needed to be increased in line with the request of the COP to international funding agencies to support, as a priority, efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity important to agriculture, in accordance with decisions III/5 and III/11.

## 2.6 Identification and Assessment of Relevant Ongoing Activities and Existing Instruments at the International Level

34. In accordance with paragraph 2 of decision III/11 (previously quoted), FAO is surveying relevant international bodies and regional organisations, inviting them to identify relevant ongoing activities and existing instruments in their respective organisations to: (i) promote the positive effects and mitigate the negative impacts of agricultural practices on biological diversity in agricultural ecosystems and their interface with other ecosystems; (ii) promote the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources of actual or potential value for food and agriculture; and (iii) promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising.

35. Pursuant to discussions between the FAO and CBD Secretariats in June 1997, the survey also elicits suggestions of priorities for the future development of the multi-year programme, of possible case studies on the issues identified, and indications of the organisations' willingness to implement them. Attention is also drawn to the specific requests to international organisations contained in paragraphs 17 and 22 of decision III/11. Finally, the organisations' intentions to be involved in the development and implementation of the decision are queried.

36. The information provided will not be available in time for SBSTTA-III. However, the SBSTTA may wish to take into account information on international organisations' activities already reported to the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. At its biennial regular sessions, the Commission regularly receives reports from international inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations (including from the FAO Secretariat) on their policies, programmes and activities in its field of competence, so that these organizations might be better able to acquaint countries with their objectives and programs, and benefit from their comments. Following the broadening of the mandate of the Commission, in November 1995, organizations were requested to report on all aspects of their work on biodiversity of importance to food and agriculture.

37. Reports were received from 35 organisations: 14 inter-governmental organisations (including the CBD Secretariat itself), 14 International Agricultural Research Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research including the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), and 7 international non-governmental organisations. The Commission considered that these reports were an important contribution to its task in promoting coordination of activities in the field of agricultural biodiversity. These reports (CGRFA-7/97/7 Parts I, II, and III and Add.1) have been made available as UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf.6. FAO's report on its own policies, programmes

and activities (CGRFA-7/97/8.1 and 8.2) have been made available as UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf.7, Part I.

38. The information provided by international organisations responding to FAO's survey will be consolidated with information already available, and made available to COP-IV.

39. In encouraging Parties to develop national strategies, programmes and plans, decision III/11 suggests that they focus, *inter alia*, on the key elements of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The decision also strongly supports the further development of the country-based Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources under the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. In this context, it should be noted that, in establishing its priority work plan, the Seventh Session of the CGRFA mandated its Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups, on Animal Genetic Resources and on Plant Genetic Resources respectively, to further the development of the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources, for consideration of the Commission at its Eighth Regular Session, and to examine the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and related follow-up activities. (See UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf.8). FAO will report to COP on progress in both these tasks at its Fourth Meeting.

40. A number of relevant mechanisms have been established, by FAO in relation to genetic resources for food and agriculture. These include:

- a) Information systems covering different aspects of agricultural biological diversity such as : (i) the World Agricultural Information Centre (WAICENT), (ii) the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources (WIEWS), which collects, disseminates and facilitates the exchange of information that governments provide on plant genetic resources collections and related technologies, and (iii) the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-is), which covers key areas of country-specific, regional and global information required for the management of farm animal genetic resources, and serves as the virtual structure for implementing the FAO Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources. COP decision II/16 welcomed FAO's offer to link its information mechanisms to the Convention's Clearing House Mechanism. FAO is prepared to be an active partner in the implementation of the Clearing House Mechanism's pilot phase;
- b) Periodical reports, which analyse the current situation and describe relevant ongoing activities and programmes being carried out by regional, international and non-governmental organisations, as well as existing instruments and mechanisms, with the aim of identifying gaps, constraints and emergency situations. These reports enable the Commission to recommend priorities and ways of increasing efficiency and harmonising the overall effort;
- c) Global plans of action, with programmes, projects and activities aimed at filling in gaps, overcoming constraints and facing emergency situations identified in such periodical reports.

41. A first periodical report and global plan of action on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture was produced under the guidance of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, before its mandate was broadened, through what COP decision II/16 described as an "exemplary preparatory process based upon national reports, regional and sub-regional meetings leading to a global assessment of biological diversity of unique ecosystems". This culminated in the Leipzig International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Following the broadening of the Commission, to cover all components of biological diversity of interest to food and agriculture, the Commission has not yet decided what components of agricultural biological

diversity future versions of these documents should cover.

42. A number of other relevant mechanisms, including international agreements and networks, are described in the Progress Report on the Global System for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, presented to the Seventh Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which is available to the SBSTTA, as UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf.7, Part II.

## 2.7 Mechanisms for Cooperation between the CBD and FAO

43. Two distinct processes are involved in the co-operation between the CBD and FAO. The first is the government-to-government process, whereby Members of FAO and the Parties to the COP inform each other of relevant deliberations in either forum. In this context, the current focus is on the interpretive process whereby the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in accordance with Resolution 3 of the Nairobi Final Act, and COP decisions II/15 and III/11, is revising the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources in harmony with the CBD. The COP, by decision III/11, in requesting FAO to inform it of its deliberations, “affirms its willingness to consider a decision by the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations that the International Undertaking should take the form of a protocol to this Convention once revised”. Moreover, the two governing bodies regularly inform each other, through the mutual reporting that has been established, of relevant decisions of importance in key areas under their mandates such as, in the case of FAO, the adoption of the Global Plan of Action, and the development of the Global Strategy for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources, and in the case of the CBD, the decision to establish the multi-year programme of activities on agricultural biological diversity.

44. The second area relates to co-operation between the two secretariats in implementing the mandates and work programmes established by their respective governing bodies. In June 1997, the FAO and CBD Secretariats made significant progress in laying the groundwork for development of a joint work programme on biological diversity for food and agriculture as part of the multi-year work programme established by decision III/11. A jointly planned technical consultation involving the two secretariats was convened at FAO Headquarters to explore areas of complementarity in their respective programmes with a view to identifying potential areas of cooperation. The discussions dealt with a broad range of activities carried out by FAO's technical departments pertinent to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture.

45. The work explored fell broadly into five categories: (1) sectoral assessment of plant animal, forest, and fisheries genetic resources and related ecosystem diversity of relevance to food and agriculture; (2) system level work on the sustainable management natural resources and development of technologies and practices that contribute to enhancing and sustaining biological diversity for food and agriculture; (3) cross-sectoral work on gender and other socio-economic issues, including local and indigenous knowledge, of relevance to the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity, and on analyses of the economics of valuation and of impacts of biotechnology on commodity trade; (4) development of policies, standards and codes to promote sustainable use of biological diversity and genetic resources in all sectors; (5) development of biodiversity indicators and information and monitoring systems for diagnostic purposes and as tools for policy decision-making and country level reporting<sup>3</sup>.

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3 An earlier elaboration of FAO's work in these and other areas is provided in UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf./7, Part I, which was prepared for the Seventh Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and reports on FAO policies, programmes and activities on crops, farm animals, forest and fishery genetic resources, as well as on legal, economic, social and gender aspects related to biological diversity for food and agriculture.

46. The consultation resulted in the drafting of a Memorandum of Co-operation between the secretariats. An FAO-CBD Secretariat Working Group on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture has been formed to finalise the Memorandum of Co-operation and joint work programme, as well as to agree upon the modalities and timetable for its implementation.

47. Current and future co-operation between the secretariats has been facilitated by the Government of the Netherlands which supported a technical workshop, held in conjunction with the consultation and attended by experts from the FAO and CBD Secretariats and IPGRI, on *Farming Systems Approaches for the Sustainable Use and Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity and Agro-ecosystems*. A tentative, integrated framework was advanced to examine agricultural biological diversity within and between ecosystem, species, and genetic levels. The analysis ranged across sectors and sub-sectors and encompassed crop and wild plants; domestic and wild animals, including insects; and forestry and fisheries genetic resources, as well as microbial organisms. Cross-cutting issues such as incentives measures, benefit sharing, access to genetic resources, and indigenous peoples were central to the investigation. The workshop resulted in the signing on 20 June 1997 of an Aide Mémoire between FAO, CBD Secretariat, and the Government of the Netherlands pledging further financial and technical support for the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity.

48. Further information on the CBD-FAO joint work programme, as well as the report of the technical workshop and the above cited Aide Mémoire are made available to SBSTTA-III in UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/Inf.10.

### III. SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### 3.1 Scientific and Technical Cooperation

49. Noting the request by the COP (paragraph 8 of decision III/11) that the clearing-house mechanism be used to promote and facilitate the development and transfer of technology relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity. The Secretariat has established contacts with FAO to discuss the development of the clearing-house mechanism through linkages with ongoing information and data systems on genetic resources for food and agriculture. The implementation of decision III/11 will benefit from the experiences already gained in the development and use of FAO's existing mechanisms including the DAD-is, the WIEWS, the WAICENT), the Global Information System on Forest Genetic Resources (REFORGEN) and external systems such as the System-Wide Information Network on Genetic Resources (SINGER) being developed by the CGIAR system. Such efforts will be conducted in such a way so as to enhance collaboration with actual and potential users of such mechanisms including groups needing solutions to specific problems, holders of technologies, technology-transfer brokers, and enabling agencies.

#### 3.2 Identification, Monitoring and Assessment

50. In paragraph 9 of decision III/11, the COP encourages Parties to use, study and develop methods and indicators to monitor the impacts of agricultural development projects and changes in production systems on biological diversity and to promote their application.

51. The use of indicators was discussed in documents UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/4 and UNEP/CBD/COP/ 3/13 and will be further considered under item 7.3 of the provisional agenda of this meeting (see document

UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/9) and also under item 5 (see document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/5) in connection with the draft programme of work on forest biological diversity.

52. There is a need for the development of criteria and indicators on agricultural biological diversity, taking into account ongoing work and existing databases and monitoring systems of relevance in the different sectors.

53. The documents for item 7 of the provisional agenda (Implementation of Article 7 Indicators and Monitoring), in particular document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/9 (Recommendations for a core set of indicators on biological diversity) address the current status of work being undertaken under the Convention in fulfillment of Recommendation II/1 and of decision III/10.

54. The assessment and reporting for the first State of the World Report on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture provided a very substantial basis from which to proceed in carrying out further assessments of relevance to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Moreover, further to its work on methods of assessment, the Seventh Session of the CGRFA reported that progress is now being made in the development of monitoring systems for the Global Plan of Action. The CGRFA also discussed the timing of the process for the preparation of the Second State of the World report, but has not yet considered the scope of this in the light of the expanded mandate of the CGRFA and the linkages with the CBD process.

### 3.3 Assessment of the impacts of measures taken under the Convention

55. Decision III/11 deals with a number of scientific, technical and technological issues of relevance to other major international organizations. For example, in response to paragraph 24 of decision III/11 and other relevant decisions of the COP, the Executive Secretary requested the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to grant the Secretariat observer status at the meetings of the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE). This observer status has been granted and the Secretariat will be exploring future collaboration with the WTO/CTE, in collaboration with other relevant organisations, to assist the WTO to develop a better appreciation of the relationship between trade and agricultural biodiversity. The Secretariat has been invited, along with secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements, to participate in the next meeting of the WTO/CTE for discussions which will focus on linkages between the multilateral environment agreements and trade.

## IV. POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL MATTERS

56. The SBSSTA, having considered the information provided in this Note, may wish to recommend to the COP to:

- a) Note with appreciation the significant progress so far made in initiating the development of the multi-year work programme on agricultural biological diversity outlined in decision III/11.
- b) Encourage the elaboration and strengthening of the modalities for cooperation established between the Secretariat and FAO.

- c) Urge Parties and Governments as well as UN bodies, regional and international organisations to make information available on their identification and assessments of activities related to agricultural biological diversity, as requested in decision III/11.
- d) Request the Executive Secretary in cooperation with FAO and other relevant international institutions to prepare a review of the scientific, technical and technological issues that need to be addressed to ensure that the relationship between international trade and agricultural biodiversity is better understood and to make available the results of the review to the World Trade Organization as appropriate.
- e) Request the Executive Secretary in close cooperation with FAO and to relevant institutions to identify modalities for facilitating coordination between thematic focal points at the national level and the content, timing and phasing of assessments at national, regional and global levels including the possible scope and coverage of future versions of global state of the world reports on biological diversity for food and agriculture.

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