



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

Statement

by

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**To the eleventh session of the FAO Commission on Genetic
Resources for Food and Agriculture**

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to address the eleventh session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. As Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I wish to extend my most sincere gratitude to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in recognition of its substantial contribution to the various programmes of work, particularly in relation to agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Much of the work on agricultural biological diversity under the Convention has been undertaken in close cooperation with FAO. For example:

- In 1996, the Conference of the Parties welcomed the contribution that the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources provides to the implementation of the Convention and has endorsed its priorities and policy recommendations (decision III/11);
- In 2000, the Conference of the Parties established a programme of work on agricultural biodiversity and requested the Executive Secretary to invite FAO to support its development and implementation (decision V/5);
- In 2002, the Conference of the Parties congratulated FAO and this Commission on successfully completing the process of negotiating the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and decided to establish and maintain cooperation with this Commission acting as the Interim Committee for the International Treaty and, upon entry into force of the Treaty, with the Governing Body;
- In 2006, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary, in partnership with FAO and in consultation with other relevant international organizations, to prepare the full review of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity for consideration at its ninth meeting (decision VIII/23 D).

It is with the deepest appreciation that I therefore welcome the recommendation of the tenth session of this Commission “that FAO work closely with the Executive Secretary of the Convention, and play a leading role in the in-depth review of the Convention’s programme of work on agricultural biological diversity”.

Towards this objective, the Convention Secretariat and FAO have established a joint work plan outlining the main activities, timetable and responsibilities to ensure timely delivery of the review for the thirteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), which will be held here at FAO in February 2008, and the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be held in Bonn, Germany, in May that year.

The year 2008 will also be a crucial time for collaboration between our agencies because the theme for next year's International Day for Biological Diversity will be "Biodiversity and Agriculture". Biological diversity is essential for the development of crop varieties and the breeding of domesticated livestock. Biodiversity also supports agricultural production through pollinators, soil organisms and the natural enemies of crop pests.

The Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity consider agricultural biodiversity to be a broad term that includes all components of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture, and all components of biodiversity that constitute the agro-ecosystem: the variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms, at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, which are necessary to sustain key functions of the agro-ecosystem, its structure and processes.

The programme of work on agricultural biodiversity is comprised of the following four mutually reinforcing elements:

- *Assessments*: to provide a comprehensive analysis of status and trends of the world's agricultural biodiversity and of their underlying causes (including a focus on the goods and services agricultural biodiversity provides), as well of local knowledge of its management.
- *Adaptive management*: to identify management practices, technologies and policies that promote the positive and mitigate the negative impacts of agriculture on biodiversity, and enhance productivity and the capacity to sustain livelihoods, by expanding knowledge, understanding and awareness of the multiple goods and services provided by the different levels and functions of agricultural biodiversity.
- *Capacity-building*: to strengthen the capacities of farmers, and indigenous and local communities, and their organizations and other stakeholders, to manage sustainably agricultural biodiversity so as to increase their benefits, and to promote awareness and responsible action.
- *Mainstreaming*: to support the development of national plans or strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity and to promote their mainstreaming and integration in sectoral and cross-sectoral plans and programmes.

The extent and the importance of FAO's contributions to this programme of work are especially evident within the following three linked initiatives on cross-cutting issues and a fourth related activity:

- *The International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators* which seeks to promote coordinated action worldwide to:
 - Monitor pollinator decline, its causes and its impact on pollination services;
 - Address the lack of taxonomic information on pollinators;
 - Assess the economic value of pollination and the economic impact of the decline of pollination services;

- Promote the conservation and the restoration and sustainable use of pollinator diversity in agriculture and related ecosystems;
- *The International Initiative on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition*, which aims to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity in programmes contributing to food security and improved human nutrition. Efforts to link biodiversity and food and nutrition issues are expected to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular target 2 of Goal 1 (i.e., to reduce by half, by 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger).
- *The International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity*: The Conference of the Parties requested Parties and relevant organizations to identify research activities to address knowledge gaps on soil biodiversity and their implications for land use practices.
- *Genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs)*: the Conference of the Parties has encouraged Parties and Governments to identify ways and means to address the potential impacts of genetic use restriction technologies on the in situ and ex situ conservation and sustainable use, including food security, of agricultural biological diversity.

A progress report that describes preliminary results of the in-depth review of the implementation of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity has been provided as an information document for this meeting (CGRFA-11/07/Inf.16). Ultimately, this review process should result in suggestions for improving the agricultural biodiversity work programme and ways forward.

Mr. Chairman,

As you know, a negotiating process has been launched within the framework of the Convention with a view to reaching agreement on an international regime on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their utilization by 2010. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is being considered as one of the possible components of this international regime. As the negotiating process moves forward, your experience in this field will be a source of inspiration for negotiators and can make a significant contribution to the success of the negotiations. I look forward to cooperating with FAO with a view to advancing the negotiations of the international regime on ABS.

In today's world population growth and climate change have made harnessing biodiversity more vital than ever. By FAO's own estimates, to keep pace with global demand for food, agricultural production must increase by more than 75 percent over the next 50 years. Climate change also threatens to cause drastic changes in the world's ecosystems. Genetic resources can provide the basis for new, more resilient and productive crops and animals, and for more sustainable agro-environments that are better able to adapt to the stresses of climate change.

The objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity are : (i) the conservation of biological diversity; (ii) the sustainable use of its components; and

(iii) the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources, thus constitute the best insurance policy for ensuring our collective survival.

The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is a key partner in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 2010 biodiversity target of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and we continue to attach great importance to the close cooperation with FAO in pursuing our common goal for the benefit of the life on Earth. I look forward to working with FAO for the celebration of next year's International Day for Biological Diversity under the theme "Biological diversity and agriculture", and I wish you every success in your deliberations in the coming days.

Thank you for your kind attention.