



Our Ref.: UN 62/1

Your Ref.:

Dear <<CBD focal point>>,

As you will be aware, the Tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10), held in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010, urged Parties and other governments to review, and as appropriate update and revise, their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, in line with the Convention's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 (COP Decision X/2).

You might also be aware that the objectives of the Convention's Programme of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity include promoting "the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources of actual and potential value for food and agriculture" (Decision V/5) and that COP 10 invited Parties "to incorporate, as appropriate, relevant elements of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity into their national biodiversity strategy and action plans" (Decision X/34).

Further, COP 10 urged Parties to "develop national and regional targets, using the Strategic Plan and its Aichi Targets, as a flexible framework ..." and to "integrat[e] ... their national targets into their national biodiversity strategies and action plans ... and report thereon to the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh or twelfth meeting" (Decision X/2). The Aichi Targets include, *inter alia*, Target 5 on reducing the loss, degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats including forests; Target 6 on the sustainable management and harvesting of fish and invertebrates; Target 7 on the sustainable management of agriculture, aquaculture and forestry; and Target 13 on the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and of wild relatives.

In short, it is vital that countries, in updating and revising their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, take into account the need for sustainable use and conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture and for monitoring the status and trends of these resources. Wider awareness of the international policy and institutional frameworks for the management of genetic resources for food and agriculture is essential to this end. Also essential is stronger collaboration between stakeholders involved in the management of biodiversity in the agricultural sector and those responsible for broader national biodiversity policies and strategies.

In light of the ongoing process of updating national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and the various international-level assessments and policy developments that have taken place in recent years in the sphere of genetic resources for food and agriculture, I am taking this opportunity to write to all National Focal Points of the Convention on Biological Diversity in order to re-emphasize the importance of a joint approach that addresses both wild and domesticated biodiversity in a coherent manner.

The FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) deals with policy, sectoral and cross-sectoral matters related to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources of relevance to food and agriculture and works in collaboration with FAO's technical departments. The following paragraphs summarize the main policy and legal frameworks specific to the various sectors of genetic resources, along with institutional arrangements linking national and international levels.

Animal genetic resources

The Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources was adopted by 109 countries at the first International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture held in September 2007, in Interlaken, Switzerland, and was subsequently endorsed by all FAO member countries at the 2007 FAO Conference. Efforts to implement the Global Plan of Action are now well underway, and many countries are in the process of planning, developing or implementing national strategies and action plans for animal genetic resources. Most countries have

appointed a National Coordinator for the Management of Animal Genetic Resources¹ who leads work in this field at country level and is the main national contact point for FAO on matters relating to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. The National Coordinator heads the country's National Focal Point for the Management of Animal Genetic Resources.

Aquatic genetic resources

The CGRFA has recognized the importance and vulnerability of aquatic genetic resources, their roles in an ecosystem approach for food and agriculture and their contributions to meeting the challenges presented by climate change. The CGRFA requested FAO to continue its work towards the preparation of a first report on *The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources*, initially by focussing on cultured aquatic species, and COP 10 expressed its appreciation to FAO for embarking on this new initiative (Decision X/28). The Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries will serve as the international framework.

Forest genetic resources

The CGRFA, with the support of FAO's Committee on Forestry, has requested that *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* (SoW-FGR) be prepared for presentation in 2013. The primary source of data and information for the preparation of the SoW-FGR will be Country Reports on Forest Genetic Resources, which are to be finalized and transmitted to FAO by the end of December 2011. Guidelines have been prepared to assist in the preparation of Country Reports. COP 10 recognized the importance of forest genetic diversity for the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity and in this context welcomed the preparation of the SoW-FGR and invited Parties, other governments and relevant organizations to support its preparation. The COP also requested the Executive Secretary of the CBD to collaborate with FAO in the preparation of the SoW-FGR. In addition to providing the basis for the global SoW-FGR report, Country Reports can serve as strategic tools for guiding national efforts to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources. Thus, their preparation should be integrated with the updating of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Governments have designated National Focal Points to liaise with FAO and lead the process of preparing their Country Reports.

Plant genetic resources

The rolling *Global Plan of Action* for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture², adopted by 150 countries in 1996, was endorsed by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD and by Heads of State and Government at the World Food Summit. The CGRFA, at its Thirteenth Regular Session in July 2011, agreed on the *Second Global Plan of Action* and recommended it for adoption by the 143rd FAO Council, which will be held from 21 to 25 November 2011. Under the *Global Plan of Action*, governments have designated National Focal Points for Plant Genetic Resources, whose task it is to convey information on the national situation of these resources to FAO, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD and other appropriate bodies. They also served as the focal points for the preparation of *The Second Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, published in 2010 and based on over 115 country reports among other inputs.

The legally binding International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture³ was adopted by the Thirty-first Session of the FAO Conference in November 2001 and entered into force in June 2004. To date, it has a membership of 127 Contracting Parties, most of which are also Parties to the CBD. The aims of the Treaty are: recognizing the enormous contribution of farmers to the diversity of crops that feed the world; establishing a global system to provide farmers, plant breeders and scientists with access to plant genetic materials; and ensuring that recipients share benefits they derive from the use of these genetic materials with the countries where they originated. Parties to the Treaty nominate National Focal Points. COP Decision X/5 on implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan, recognizes that implementing the Strategic Plan is facilitated by the coherent and synergistic implementation of biodiversity-related conventions and agreements at all levels. In this context, the International Treaty is the international convention of direct relevance.

The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)⁴ is an international plant health agreement established in 1952. It currently has 177 Contracting Parties. It aims to protect the genetic resources of cultivated and wild plants by

¹ <http://dad.fao.org/cgi-bin/EfabisWeb.cgi?sid=-1,contacts>

² <http://www.globalplanofaction.org/>

³ <http://www.planttreaty.org>

⁴ <https://www.ippc.int/>

preventing the introduction and spread of pests. The IPPC is one of the three international standard-setting bodies recognized by the WTO's agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures.¹ One of the obligations of the Convention is that each Contracting Party shall designate a contact point² for the exchange of information connected with the implementation of this Convention.

In conclusion, a coherent approach to planning biodiversity policies at national level will bear fruit both in the food and agriculture sector and for the sustainable use and conservation of national biodiversity as a whole. To this end, I strongly believe that countries would benefit greatly if they fully and effectively involve their National Coordinators for the Management of Animal Genetic Resources, National Focal Points for Plant Genetic Resources, National Focal Points for the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, National Focal Points for Forest Genetic Resources, National Focal Points for Aquatic Genetic Resources (once established) and other relevant stakeholders from the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors in the process of updating and revising their national biodiversity strategy and action plans.

Please find enclosed copies of the following publications:

- *Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (folder)³
- *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (folder)⁴
- *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources and the Interlaken Declaration*⁵
- *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (CD-ROM)⁶
- *The Second Report on The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (CD-ROM)⁷
- *Preparation of National Strategies and Action Plans for Animal Genetic Resources* (guidelines)⁸
- *Guidelines for the preparation of Country Reports for The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*⁹
- *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*¹⁰
- *Technical guidelines for responsible fisheries No 5, suppl. 3. Genetic resource management in aquaculture*¹¹

Yours sincerely,



Alexander Müller
Assistant Director-General
Natural Resources Management and Environment Department

¹ <https://www.ippc.int/index.php?id=13399>

² https://www.ippc.int/index.php?id=1110520&no_cache=1&type=contactpoints&L=0

³ <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa>

⁴ <http://www.planttreaty.org/>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1404e/a1404e00.htm>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1250e/a1250e00.htm>

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1500e/i1500e00.htm>

⁸ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/i0770e/i0770e00.htm>

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/forestry/fgr/64585/en/>

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/v9878e/v9878e00.HTM>

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/011/i0283e/i0283e00.htm#Contents>

CC:

1. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - Secretariat
2. Permanent Representative of <country> to FAO
3. FAO Representative in <country>
4. National Coordinator for the Management of Animal Genetic Resources, <country>
5. National Focal Point for the Preparation of Country Reports on Forest Genetic Resources, <country>
6. National Focal Point, Plant Genetic Resources, <country>
7. National Focal Point of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, <country>
8. International Plant Protection Convention, Contact Point, <country>