

**Statement of the Alliance of International Agricultural Research Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Submitted at the second session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty, 29 October-2 November 2007, Rome**

**Agenda item 10: Implementation of the multilateral system of access and benefit sharing**

(Reference document: IT/GB-2/07/Inf. 11: Experience of the Centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) with the implementation of the agreements with the Governing Body, with particular reference to the Standard Material Transfer Agreement)

Mr. Chairman,

The CGIAR System has been committed to facilitating the successful implementation of the Treaty and its Multilateral System during the eighteen months since the First Session of the Governing Body.

As you know, the Governing Body in June 2006 approved the agreements between the Governing Body and the International Agricultural Research Centres of the CGIAR System bringing the in trust collections they hold within the purview of the Treaty, and called on the Centres to sign the agreements. The 11 CGIAR Centres holding in trust collections, together with the Centro Agronomico Tropical de Investigacion e Inseganza (CATIE) accordingly signed agreements with the Governing Body on World Food Day, 16 October 2006 bringing over 650,000 accessions within the purview of the Treaty. Since then further agreements have been signed between two of the institutions holding COGENT coconut germplasm collections and are under discussion with the other two. At the time of signature of the agreements in October 2006, the Centres issued a Statement welcoming the signature of the agreements and outlining their understanding of the commitments they had entered into, including their commitment to implementing the use of the Standard Material Transfer Agreement as of 1 January 2007. A copy of the Statement is set out as Annex 1 to the document IT/GB-2/07/Inf.11.

As indicated in Document Inf. 11, most Centres started using the SMTA as of 1 January 2007. During the period 1 January through 1 August 2007, the Centres distributed some 97,669 samples of Annex 1 PGRFA in some 833 shipments. This is actually a significantly higher number of materials that were distributed by the same time last year using the interim MTA pursuant to the 1994 FAO-In Trust Agreements,. Part of the reason for this year's higher number is that, in addition to supplying PGRFA held in *ex situ* genebank collections, the Centres have also agreed to distribute the products of their own research under the SMTA. Such materials were generally not covered by the FAO-In Trust Agreements, and represent a significant boost in the value added component of the cumulative

range of materials available within the MLS. In fact, some 48,848 samples of improved materials were distributed, derived, for the most part, from germplasm held in trust by the Centres. During the same period, the Centres also received some 3,988 new accessions into the genebanks.

Mr. Chair, during the same period of time, only three potential recipients of materials from the CGIAR Centres refused to accept material under the SMTA.

Nonetheless, some concerns were however raised by potential recipients about the SMTA. The nature of these concerns is outlined in the paper. Some of them related to the length and complexity of the SMTA. Others concerned questions that the potential recipients felt were not clear in the SMTA itself. The Governing Body may wish to consider whether it would be useful to clarify some of these questions, such as the length of time that mandatory benefit-sharing should last, by means of explanatory footnotes to the SMTA.

Finally, the Centres have expressed the need for some guidance with respect to the form and periodicity of reports to be made to the Governing Body.

Mr. Chairman, before concluding this Statement, I would like to draw the attention of the Governing Body to some of the work that the CGIAR System has been doing to ensure consistency in the implementation of the SMTA. This has included the preparation by the System-wide Genetic Resources Programme (SGRP) of a Guide for Centres on the implementation of the SMTA. Copies of the Guide in English have been made available to delegates and can also be downloaded from the FAO PlantTreaty website. The Guide includes a series of "Frequently Asked Questions" that are being put out by the individual Centres on their websites, also with the assistance of SGRP.

The CGIAR System is also collaborating with FAO in the Project on Technology Support for the Implementation of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit Sharing, which is described more fully in Information document 4. The Project aims at developing tools that can assist Providers and Recipients of PGRFA in reporting on the material that is in the Multilateral System and in using the SMTA, and reporting on its use, with the lowest possible transaction costs. Following an initial consultation held in February 2007, Bioversity International and FAO are cooperating in the development of a set of prototype information technology tools to implement the protocols and transactions required for managing the SMTA, taking into account existing information systems. I will not say more regarding the implementation of this joint project, since it is already fully reported on in Document Inf. 4, and the software being developed will be the subject of a separate demonstration later in this Session.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.