

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 13: Implementation of Article 6, Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources.

[Reference document: IT/GB-2/07/Inf.8 'Regarding implementation of Article 6 of the Treaty concerning sustainable use of PGRFA']

Mr/Madam Chair, on behalf of the Alliance of CGIAR Centres, I thank you for an opportunity to address this meeting.

The First Session of the Governing Body invited the International Agricultural Research Centres to provide information on relevant measures taken by the Centres related to Article 6 of the Treaty, which could, when considered along submissions from Contracting Parties, other governments and other relevant organizations:

“serve as a basis to assess progress in implementing Article 6, at a future session of the Governing Body.”

In November 2006, the acting Secretary of the Governing Body sent a message to the Director General of Bioversity International, on behalf of all the CGIAR Centres, reiterating the request for submissions from the Centres on this issue.

CGIAR Centres prepared a submission to this meeting which has been distributed as Information Document number 8. Among other things, this document provides a general overview of Centers' activities that are related to subarticles 6.2. a) to 6.2. g). All Centres are involved, to some extent, in activities that may fall under these subarticles. An overall analysis shows that the CGIAR Centres are especially strong in activities related to 6.2.c), which refers to participatory plant breeding, and 6.2.d), which concerns broadening the genetic base of crops and increasing the range of genetic diversity available to farmers. Other activities closely related to Article 6, such as conducting research on local and locally adapted crops, varieties and underutilized species, are gaining importance in the work of the CGIAR. We are in the process of finalizing a set of tables, which provides considerably more detail than we could include in our written report to this meeting, about the activities each Centre is engaged in that is relevant to the implementation of article 6. Those tables will be posted on the website of the System-wide Genetic Resources Programme.

Mr/Madam Chair, Information Document 8 also summarizes some of the challenges we faced in synthesizing Centres' activities relative to each of the subarticles 6.2 a-g. Time does not permit me to recite those issues now, but we included them in our written report in the hope that that they will be helpful to other organizations and or Parties if and when they are developing similar kinds of reports to the Governing Body in the future. We are grateful to Switzerland for drawing attention to our submission in this regard.

The paper suggests that it would be useful to have some additional guidance, perhaps at the level of the Governing Body, concerning how to move from the stated purpose of Article 6, i.e., promoting the sustainable use of PGRFA, to identifying policy and legal measures to support the activities included in Article 6.2(a)-(g) and other relevant activities. An interpretive device, or logical framework, identifying the basic elements of what is meant by 'sustainable use of PGRFA' would be very helpful as a means identifying a more comprehensive range of measures that are important to promote.

To this end, Mr. Chair, in Annex of the document, the Centres have included a short document which tentatively identifies some of the elements that could be included in such a tool or interpretive framework. This was also referred to by Switzerland in its submission. We want to underscore that this text is being offered only as an example of a starting point for a more protracted discussion, possibly facilitated through an inter-sessional process, to general technical inputs for consideration of future meetings of the Governing Body, concerning the sustainable use of PGRFA and 'policy and legal measures' to promote it.

Mr. Chair, the Centres have organized a side event to be held immediately after this afternoon session wherein the issue of sustainable use of PGRFA and possible future work of the Governing Body will be discussed. It is cosponsored by the governments of Ministry of Agriculture of Brazil and the Swiss Federal Office of Agriculture. The event will be held today at 6:00 PM in the Lebanon room.

Thank you very much.