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REPORT OF THE
COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

Third Session
Rome, 17-21 April 1989

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Third Session of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources was held in Rome from 17 to 21 April 1989. Since its Second Session in 1987, ten new members had joined the Commission: the membership thus stood at 96. The list of members of the Commission and/or countries which have adhered to the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources is attached as Appendix B. The Session was attended by representatives of 63 Member Nations which are members of the Commission, by observers from 13 other Member Nations, by an observer from one United Nations Member State which is not a Member of FAO, by representatives from the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, by representatives from the European Economic Community, and by observers from eleven international organizations. The list of delegates and observers is attached as Appendix C.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN

2. The Commission elected Mr. Horacio M. Carandang (Philippines) as Chairman of the Commission, Mr. José Miguel Bolivar (Spain) as first Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Melaku Worede (Ethiopia) as Second Vice-Chairman.

3. Mr. C.H. Bonte-Friedheim, Assistant Director-General, Department of Agriculture, informed the Commission of the successful establishment of the International Fund on Plant Genetic Resources, and of the contributions so far received. He mentioned the recent meeting of the Working Group, which had paved the way for the discussions of the Commission itself, and reviewed some of the main issues that would be covered. Mr. Bonte-Friedheim informed the Commission of the decision of the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR) to separate from FAO and relocate its headquarters from Rome to Copenhagen; this would be the subject of a new paper to be presented to the Commission for its consideration. Mr. Bonte-Friedheim underlined FAO's long interest and involvement in the conservation and use of plant genetic resources and biodiversity in general; he noted that the next session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) would discuss the preservation of animal genetic resources, which might lead to a recommendation to enlarge the mandate of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources to cover other genetic resources as well. In concluding, he expressed the Director-General's hope that the Commission would reach consensus on the major issues, paving the way for further assistance to developing countries for the protection of all endangered plant species, to the benefit of farmers everywhere, and of future generations.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND TIMETABLE FOR THE SESSION

4. The Agenda as adopted is set out in Appendix A. The list of documents appears as Appendix D.

5. The Commission appointed the following members to the Drafting Committee: Australia, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Libya, Mexico, Norway, Peru, Spain and the United Kingdom. Mr. M. A. Cuadra Palafox of Mexico was elected Chairman of this Committee.

REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

6. The Chairman of the Working Group, Ambassador Carlos Di Mottola Balestra, reported on the third meeting of the Working Group, which was held on 13 and 14 April 1989 at FAO, Rome. His report is attached as Appendix E. The meeting discussed, in particular, Items 4 (Progress Report on the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources) and 6 (Overall Review of FAO's Activities in Plant Genetic Resources and Progress Report on the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources) of the proposed agenda for the Commission's Third Session. The meeting also discussed IBPGR's decision to move its Headquarters to Denmark.

7. The Working Group considered that document CPGR/89/5, which reviewed FAO's activities in plant genetic resources, gave an excellent overview of this work, and that the various matters it presented constituted a useful basis for developing a plan of work for the Commission.

8. The Chairman highlighted the global framework which FAO had established since 1983, to coordinate actions in the field of plant genetic resources, and which consisted of a basic legal document - the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, an international forum - the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, and a financial mechanism - the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources. The Working Group welcomed this global framework and, in particular, the establishment of the International Fund.

9. The Working Group stressed the need for close cooperation between all organizations involved in plant genetic resources activities, and proposed the establishment of an Advisory Committee, which should include all the parties interested. The Working Group also proposed the development of a Code of Conduct for collectors of plant genetic resources.

10. The Chairman reported that progress had been made towards an agreed interpretation of certain articles of the International Undertaking, in particular, the matter of the free exchange of plant genetic resources, the question of plant breeders' rights, and the proposals made during the Second Session of the Commission with respect to farmers' rights.

11. The Working Group strongly expressed its concern about the proposed separation of IBPGR from FAO, particularly because FAO had until now provided the necessary legal and political cover for IBPGR's activities. The Working Group considered that the various financial, legal and administrative consequences of the separation would need further study. It also expressed its concern that proper arrangements should be made for the various documents and data bases that had been jointly developed by IBPGR and FAO.

12. The Commission agreed that the report of the Third Meeting of the Working Group should be further discussed under the various agenda items on which it touched.

OVERALL REVIEW OF FAO'S ACTIVITIES IN PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES, AND PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

13. The Commission recognized the useful information given in document CPGR/89/5 regarding the historical and legal context of FAO's activities and the role of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources; the document identifies

the matters that the Commission would have to deal with to carry out its work in a systematic way. The Commission appreciated the pioneering work that FAO had undertaken since 1947, and agreed that the Organization had, since 1983, developed a unique and irreplaceable global system on plant genetic resources.

This included:

- (i) the International Undertaking, a legal framework to ensure the conservation, use and availability of these resources;
- (ii) the Commission, a unique intergovernmental forum, where countries which were donors or users of germplasm, funds and technology, could seek consensus on subjects of global interest; and
- (iii) the International Fund, a financial mechanism which would permit the implementation of the principles of the International Undertaking, to the equitable benefit of both the countries which contributed germplasm, and those which contributed funds and technology.

14. It was agreed that the main task of the Commission was to keep under permanent review the overall situation of plant genetic resources, and to monitor progress in fulfilling the objectives of the International Undertaking.

15. The Commission generally endorsed the proposal for systematizing its work contained in paragraphs 22 to 44 of CPGR/89/5. The Commission agreed that the Secretariat should prepare periodical reports on FAO's activities, programmes and policies for its consideration. The Commission recommended that the Secretariat should periodically prepare a report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources, with the cooperation of the other bodies concerned. The report should analyse the current plant genetic resources situation, describe activities and programmes being carried out by regional, international and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of identifying gaps, constraints, and emergency situations; this would allow the Commission to recommend priorities, and ways of harmonizing the overall effort.

16. The Commission noted that financial constraints had resulted in its recommendation on the development of a Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources not being implemented. It again recommended the establishment of a flexible but comprehensive information system, in close cooperation with those organizations which are already working in this field. The Commission also agreed that, as part of this system, an Early Warning System should be developed, to draw rapid attention to hazards threatening the operation of genebanks holding base collections, and to the danger of the extinction of plant species and the loss of genetic diversity throughout the world.

17. The Commission noted the proposal for an Action Plan, but considered that this needed careful consideration before being endorsed and requested its Working Group to study the possible form such an action plan might take, and the financial implications.

18. The Commission encouraged FAO to pursue the development, in cooperation with other organizations, of an international network of base collections, including those under the auspices of FAO, as provided for by Article 7 of the Undertaking.

19. The Commission considered that implementation of the International Undertaking, and the many activities this would involve, was a task which would have to draw on the resources of all the world's countries, and also involve, by means of appropriate coordination, intergovernmental, international, regional and non-governmental organizations working in this field. The Commission therefore recommended that its Working Group develop its proposal for the establishment of an Advisory Committee to foster dialogue between the organizations involved, harmonize responsibilities, and promote cooperation.

20. The Commission expressed its strong concern at the proliferation of the institutions and organizations initiating programmes on plant genetic resources and biological diversity, each of which had its own mandate and priorities. It felt that there was a possibility of a duplication of efforts and a waste of resources, which the proposed Advisory Committee might help avoid. The Commission considered that it was necessary to utilize all possible means to ensure adequate coordination among all bodies which are engaged in plant genetic resources work.

21. The Commission considered another important task to be the development of international agreements for the conservation and use of plant genetic resources. In this respect, it recommended that the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Working Group, draft a Code of Conduct for international collectors of germplasm, to also cover the conservation and use of plant genetic resources. Further tasks were to promote strategies for regional cooperation, and cooperation with non-governmental organizations, which were broadly supported.

22. Most members of the Commission expressed satisfaction with the establishment of the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources and with the contributions received so far.

23. However, many members expressed concern about the limited amounts so far received, given the multitude of activities to be undertaken, and emphasized the need for increased contribution in the future.

24. The Commission also welcomed the contributions in kind that have been made to the Fund, including space in national genebanks, offers of in-service training in national institutions, and the donation of germplasm samples. The Commission expressed the wish that contributions in cash and kind continued to be made by countries, organizations, and private companies and individuals. In this respect it noted with appreciation the initiative of the International Coalition for Development Action (ICDA), a non-governmental organization, in starting a fund-raising campaign amongst the general public throughout the world.

25. The Commission agreed that the Fund could become a novel mechanism, administered under the supervision of an intergovernmental body, to channel funds to activities designed to fulfil the global responsibility to safeguard the world's heritage of plant genetic resources to the benefit of present and future generations. However, some members also pointed out that a variety of mechanisms already existed to provide assistance to plant genetic resources activities.

26. The Commission agreed that the priorities of the Fund should be those of the International Undertaking, and that it should concentrate mainly on fields and activities not well covered by other national, regional or international organizations. The Commission agreed that the Fund should initially concentrate on the development of human resources and on institution building, through the strengthening and development of infrastructures and national capacities in developing countries, for the better conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources. The Fund should also be able to respond to emergency situations. It was considered important to more precisely define the role, scope and operating procedures of the Fund.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT COVERAGE OF BASE COLLECTIONS IN THE WORLD WITH REGARD TO CROPS OF INTEREST TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

27. The Commission examined document CPGR/89/7, which gave details of the current coverage of base collections in the world, by geographical origin and species. It noted that the major staple crops of commercial importance were backed by strong research programmes, and were the most frequently represented in the existing base collections. However, crops or species of regional interest to developing countries were rather poorly represented, and the Commission agreed that much remained to be done for such crops, such as the collection, conservation, and use of this germplasm.

28. The Commission noted that the present network of base collections designated by IBPGR relied only on bona fide agreements, and therefore lacked legal force. Hence, the Commission reconfirmed the need to formalize legal arrangements with the governments concerned through adherence to the International Undertaking. These arrangements should not be mutually exclusive, and nothing prevented governments holding base collections designated by non-governmental organizations from formalizing their commitment through FAO.

29. The Commission noted that some genebanks which had accepted the responsibility for the long-term conservation of germplasm were poorly managed, and had unreliable and ineffective equipment, with the result that there was a great risk of the loss of germplasm contained in such genebanks. The major constraints were the lack of secure operating funds, and manpower inadequately trained for the maintenance of the collections according to appropriate technical standards and management procedures. The Commission emphasized that there was an urgent need for greater financial assistance to some base collection centres.

30. The Commission noted that information on the kind and amount of material stored in base collections, especially for local crops of importance to the developing countries, was often inadequate or missing, and that little of the germplasm so far collected had yet been characterized and evaluated. The Commission recommended that greater assistance be given to such centres, to accelerate germplasm documentation, characterization and evaluation, and to train further manpower for genetic resources work.

31. The Commission also noted the other constraints and limitations, mentioned in paragraph 35 of document CPGR/89/7, which restricted the security and the availability of germplasm samples: these included legal, political, commercial, economic, technical and quarantine restrictions. The Commission agreed that, in order to overcome some of these limitations, and as provided for in the International Undertaking, priority should be given to strengthening the existing base collections, and bringing such collections under the auspices or jurisdiction of FAO within the FAO Global Network of Base Collections.

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN IN SITU CONSERVATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

32. The Commission examined the progress that had occurred in the field of the in situ conservation of plant genetic resources since its Second Session, and endorsed the actions proposed in paragraphs 5 to 10 of document CPGR/89/8. While expressing its satisfaction with the work achieved, it urged FAO to intensify its efforts, in particular with regard to the in situ conservation of the wild relatives of annual crops, and to pay special attention to the species occurring in marginal and fragile ecosystems. In this context, it stressed the importance of developing and supporting participatory schemes for on-farm testing and the conservation and enhancement of the local landraces of crop species.

33. The Commission noted with appreciation the work a number of countries had carried out in relation to ecosystems and the in situ conservation of plant and animal genetic resources, and acknowledged the valuable contribution non-governmental organizations had made in raising public awareness, and by direct action in this field. In reviewing these activities, it stressed the common responsibility of all countries in the pursuance of conservation activities.

34. The Commission noted with concern the high rate of deforestation in the tropics, which adversely affected the survival of wild plant and animal species. It recognized that the continued existence and successful management of conservation areas could only be ensured if they contributed to improving the day-to-day well-being of the local populations, and therefore stressed the need to consider in situ conservation activities within the framework of overall landuse and development plans.

35. The Commission highlighted the need to actively support research, plant exploration, and the establishment of pilot in situ conservation areas with the aim of increasing knowledge of the distribution, variation, biological characteristics and genetic resources of the target species and ecosystems, so as to improve their management. However, in view of the urgency, concrete full-scale conservation activities should also be launched immediately.

36. The Commission requested FAO to conduct a study for the establishment of a network of in situ conservation areas, covering both plant and animal genetic resources. This network should aim at complementing the international network of ex situ base collections in genebanks. It also stressed the need for continued support to existing networks of protected areas.

37. The Commission noted with satisfaction the growing number of technical and training documents on in situ conservation that had been recently prepared by FAO and other international organizations, and stressed the need to further develop national skills. It underlined the continued need to strengthen training efforts and the dissemination of information at all levels, and stressed the importance of preparing information materials in a wide range of languages, according to local needs.

PROGRESS REPORT ON LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH A VIEW TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF BASE COLLECTIONS IN GENEbanks UNDER THE AUSPICES OR JURISDICTION OF FAO

38. At its Second Session, the Commission had discussed Document CPGR/87/6 relating to the Study on Legal Arrangements with a View to the Establishment of an International Network of Base Collections in Genebanks under the Auspices or Jurisdiction of FAO, which outlined four possible arrangements (Models A to D). It had been agreed that the governments and institutions concerned might choose which model, or variant thereof, to follow. The Commission had invited the Director-General to approach governments, the International Agricultural Research Centres, and other bodies, with a view to ascertaining their readiness to bring their base collections under the auspices or jurisdiction of FAO, and, if they were prepared to do so, to indicate the arrangements they favoured. The Director-General had done so by Circular State Letter G/LE-48 of 23 October 1987.

39. The Commission noted that, at the time Document CPGR/89/4 was prepared, the Secretariat had received 27 replies; 21 governments and institutions had stated their willingness to bring their collections within the network. These replies were analyzed in Document CPGR/89/4. In the course of the discussions, several Member Nations indicated that they were also prepared to place their base collections under the auspices of FAO, under certain conditions, and others indicated that they were actively studying the possibility of participation. The Commission expressed its deep satisfaction at this extremely positive response.

40. The Commission also noted that four Member Nations had spontaneously offered FAO space in their genebanks for the establishment of collections (Argentina, Ethiopia, Kenya and Spain). In the discussions, other countries announced possible additional offers of space. These offers were warmly welcomed by the Commission. The Commission felt that such offers constituted a very promising variant of the placing of a pre-existing collection under the auspices or jurisdiction of FAO, and might lead to offers by yet more governments and institutions to make available, or create space, to be put at the disposal of FAO, or to donate duplicates of their germplasm. The collections FAO then established could take into account a variety of specific requirements, such as the needs of the prospective users of a given collection, regional preferences, or special exigencies.

41. In the context of the possible agreed interpretation of the Undertaking, the question was raised of what was meant by "without restriction" in the provisions of Models C, para (g) and D, para (e), whereby "the Government would bind itself in the agreement concluded with FAO, to make the resources

in the base collection available for the purpose of scientific research, plant breeding or genetic resource conservation, without restriction, either directly to users or through FAO, and either free of charge or on mutually agreed terms". The Commission noted that the principle of "unrestricted exchange" stemmed from Article 7.1 (a) of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources. The Commission noted further that this was the ultimate aim of the Undertaking, and that, whilst any restrictions imposed by national legislation would have to be taken into account, every effort should be made to eliminate such restrictions, or keep them to a minimum; however, the term did not imply that such exchange need be free of charge.

42. The Commission noted that Models C and D provided for the placing of base collections under the auspices, rather than the jurisdiction of FAO, which was envisaged in Models A and B. It was noted that Model D did not provide for any form of verification by FAO.

43. The Commission noted that FAO's and IBPGR's networks would be complementary, and did not give rise to additional expense or overlapping. Because of the non-governmental nature and lack of legal status of IBPGR, it had to rely on informal arrangements, whereas FAO was an inter-governmental body able to receive legal commitments from national governments. There would, however, be no obstacle to bringing IBPGR-designated genebanks within the FAO network. They might continue to benefit from the technical and managerial expertise of IBPGR and other technical bodies, such as the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), whilst enjoying the legal and political cover of the FAO international network. In developing technical standards for genebanks, FAO could draw extensively on the standards already developed by IBPGR and others.

44. The Commission underlined the necessity of defining precisely the kind of material to be included in the FAO network, and, in particular, the distinction between base and active collections. The Commission felt that further work would be required to clarify the distinction. The Commission noted, however, that considerable progress had already been made in this direction and that the definitions proposed in paragraphs 6 and 7 of Document CPGR/89/7 were a significant contribution to reaching agreement on this distinction.

45. The Commission recognized that FAO would do its utmost to assist genebanks brought into the network in ensuring that the technical and managerial standards were adequate to enable them to fulfill the tasks entrusted to them under the International Undertaking. It also recognized that the extent to which FAO might eventually be able to provide financial support to assist such genebanks in ensuring adequate technical and managerial standards would depend on the resources available. The matter needed further consideration.

46. The Commission expressed its satisfaction with the considerable progress which was being made in establishing the FAO international network, and requested the Secretariat to continue to make every effort in this direction. It strongly supported the Secretariat's proposals for further action and, consequently, requested the Director-General:

- (i) to continue to seek the views of governments and institutions which had not yet replied to Circular State Letter G/LE-48 of 23 October 1987;
- (ii) to initiate negotiations with governments and institutions which were considering or had already stated their willingness to bring their collections within the network;
- (iii) to examine with the Member Nations concerned the feasibility, and the means of accepting their offers to make space available to FAO in their genebanks;
- (iv) to examine the respective roles of base collections, and working or active collections; and
- (v) to keep under review, and report on the financial implications for FAO of the arrangements being concluded.

IMPLICATIONS OF NEW BIOTECHNOLOGIES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING

47. The Commission congratulated the Secretariat on the balanced and clear analysis of the implications of the new biotechnologies contained in document CPGR/89/9.

48. The Commission agreed that these biotechnologies were tools with great potential for improving the conservation of plant genetic resources, and for speeding up breeding programmes. For example, although not without problems, in vitro techniques offered new possibilities for the storage and safe exchange of germplasm. Attention was also drawn to the value of such techniques in collecting germplasm. It was emphasized that genetic engineering techniques offered enormous opportunities to increase the knowledge, value and use of the world germplasm, and to speed up breeding processes. The new biotechnologies promised increased production, and it was important that, when appropriate to the needs of developing countries, they should also be used to advance sustainable agriculture in the often marginal ecosystems of the developing world. There was, however, a need to avoid over-optimism, as much work would be required before these techniques yielded their full potential.

49. The Commission noted with concern the possibility of certain important tropical products - such as vanilla, sugar and pyrethrum - being substituted by genetically engineered products, to the detriment of countries currently producing these commodities. A further possibility was overproduction in the case of a number of commodities, such as vegetable oils, palm oil and coconuts. In such cases, the importance of finding ways to enable the countries affected to develop alternatives was recognized, and the Commission stressed the need to safeguard important genetic material which might otherwise be lost.

68. The ADG/AG concluded by informing the Commission that the CGIAR would meet in Canberra, in May 1989, and that the report which had been made available to the Commission would also be presented to the CGIAR. The CGIAR would also be informed of the Commission's discussions on the matter.

69. The Chairman of the Board of IBPGR reported that the Board had reached the conclusion that it would be best to establish the IBPGR's headquarters fully independently of FAO. The main reasons for this decision were:

- (i) the need to enhance its scientific capacity to carry out its mandate; and
- (ii) the need to improve IBPGR's ability to attract strong and continuing financial support.

The Chairman of the Board also referred to:

- (i) the need to ensure continued and even closer interaction with FAO; and
- (ii) the need to find a stable location for its headquarters.

He stated that the Board fully appreciated FAO's concern that relations between FAO and IBPGR remain close.

70. The Chairman of the Board of IBPGR indicated that the Board would place the matter before the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. It would also consider a framework for assuring a continued close working relationship with FAO.

71. The Chairman of the Board of IBPGR assured FAO and the Commission that the concerns raised by paragraphs 16 to 20 of document CPGR/89/11 would be carefully considered as the Board continued its studies. He emphasized that any costs involved in the separation and redeployment of staff would be covered by IBPGR, through funds available from the CGIAR. He concluded by emphasizing that the move would be carefully prepared, not take place for at least two-and-a-half or three years, and allow the time needed to make proper arrangements to assure continued close collaboration between FAO and IBPGR. The Commission noted with satisfaction that the Director-General of FAO had established an internal working group to deal with these matters.

72. The Commission expressed its thanks for IBPGR's presentation, clarifying the new developments that had taken place in IBPGR since the last external review, and which included matters of importance to the Commission.

73. The Commission, however, noted its concern with respect to the representativeness of the samples in the IBPGR network of base collections. Suggestions were made for the more rational planning of IBPGR's activities. Systematic surveys of natural variation should be the starting point, and more crops should be covered, with greater attention paid to the needs of developing countries. The lack of work on in situ conservation was noted, as this could be of importance in the development of base collections.

74. The Commission expressed concern with the Board's decision to separate from FAO, particularly as a very large number of related matters appeared to have been inadequately studied. It considered that there had not been proper consultation with FAO; some members, however, noted that the proposal was not completely unexpected, but hasty. Many donors of funds, as well as donors of germplasm, expressed surprise and disappointment at not having been consulted with respect to the decision of the Board.

75. Some members indicated that the Board's proposal needed study and confirmation by the CGIAR, and would therefore be carefully re-examined by the various donors. In that respect, the question was raised as to whether the Board's members, who served in their personal capacity, might change cooperative arrangements that had been established by Governments in a matter that concerned the common heritage of mankind. The questions therefore arose of what the exact status of IBPGR would now be, and of how the duplication of effort might be avoided. The Commission stressed that the cooperative arrangements with FAO had so far assured the multilateral character of IBPGR.

76. Most of the members emphasized the synergistic character of past cooperation between FAO and IBPGR, and noted with concern that separation would create a completely new situation. The Commission stressed that much of IBPGR's success depended on its relationship with FAO, and therefore encouraged IBPGR to remain either within FAO headquarters, or in Rome, which would also favour continued links between developed and developing countries in this work. Concern was expressed that separation might have negative implications, in particular for developing countries, and affect the free exchange and security of germplasm. A few countries, however, felt that IBPGR would be able to function administratively separate from FAO, and outside FAO's premises.

77. The Commission emphasized that the change in IBPGR's status should be based on a clear definition of the respective roles of FAO - both its Secretariat, and the Commission - and IBPGR in assuring effective complementarity regarding the conservation and use of plant genetic resources.

78. Various members expressed concern about the financial implications of the move and indicated that the possible increased costs resulting from an independent IBPGR should not be to the detriment of the resources made available for plant genetic resource work in developing countries. It was also felt that other possible locations should have been considered, including, in particular, the developing countries. Italy indicated that it would have hosted IBPGR, upon request, on condition that the proposed separation from FAO was considered positive by all concerned.

79. In case IBPGR separates from FAO, the Commission urged that proper arrangements, inter alia, be made to ensure that the databases and documentation developed by IBPGR also remain within FAO, in view of the importance of their linkage with the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources of FAO, taking into account the legal situation, once this had been clarified. All this within the context of the FAO's Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources.

80. Many members doubted that IBPGR could continue to assist FAO in its field work after separation, as a substantial part of the professional staff involved in this work would leave FAO headquarters. The suggestion was made to study the possibility of delegating IBPGR's research activities to the IARCs, within their mandates, leaving its field programme within FAO. Many members noted that the move would affect FAO's operational capacity, and felt that the FAO's programme of work would have to be strengthened accordingly, in particular, the Commission Secretariat and the Seed Laboratory.

81. The Commission recommended that every effort be made to carefully develop proper arrangements for continued effective cooperation between IBPGR and FAO, and for ensuring effective complementarity between the two organizations, and that a Memorandum of Understanding be prepared to that effect, taking into account the objectives of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources. The Commission also proposed that its Working Group assist FAO in these matters, and monitor progress. The arrangements to be established should cover both the relationship between FAO and IBPGR, and the relationship between the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and IBPGR.

DATE, PLACE AND PROGRAMME OF THE NEXT SESSION

82. The Secretary of the Commission presented the draft Agenda for the Fourth Session of the Commission, taking into consideration the need to conduct its tasks in a systematic manner, as agreed by the Third Session. The draft Agenda as attached in Appendix G, was accepted by the Commission. However, it was agreed that a final decision on the Agenda, date and place of the Fourth Session of the Commission would be determined by the Director-General in consultation with the Chairman.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

83. The report of the Session was adopted by the Commission on 21 April 1989.

Appendix A

AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairmen
2. Adoption of agenda and timetable for the Session
3. Report of the third meeting of the Working Group (oral presentation by Chairman of Working Group)
4. Overall review of FAO's activities in plant genetic resources and progress report on the establishment of the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources
5. Assessment of current coverage of base collections in the world, with regard to crops of interest to developing countries
6. Assessment of progress on "in situ" conservation
7. Progress report on legal arrangements with a view to the possible establishment of an International Network of Base Collections in Genebanks, under the auspices or jurisdiction of FAO
8. Implications of new biotechnologies for the International Undertaking
9. Progress report on the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources
10. IBPGR activities and FAO relationship with IBPGR
11. Date, place and programme of next Session
12. Adoption of the Report

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
AND/OR COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE ADHERED TO THE
INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

<u>Country</u>	<u>CPGR</u>	<u>Under- taking</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>CPGR</u>	<u>Under- taking</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>CPGR</u>	<u>Under- taking</u>
Afghanistan	X		France	X	XX	New Zealand		XX
Antigua & Barbuda		X	Gabon		X	Nicaragua		X
Argentina	X	XX	Gambia	X		Niger	X	
Australia	X		Germany, F.R.	X	XX	Norway	X	XX
Austria	X	X	Greece	X	X	Oman		XX
Bahrain		X	Grenada		X	Pakistan	X	
Bangladesh	X	X	Guatemala	X		Panama	X	X
Barbados	X	X	Guinea	X	X	Paraguay		X
Belgium		XX	Guinea-Bissau	X		Peru	X	X
Belize	X		Guyana	X		Philippines	X	X
Benin	X		Haiti	X	X	Poland	X	XX
Bolivia	X	X	Honduras	X	X	Portugal	X	
Botswana	X		Hungary	X	XX	Rwanda	X	X
Brazil	X		Iceland	X	XX	St.Christ.& Nevis	X	
Bulgaria	X	XX	India	X	X	St.Lucia	X	
Burkina Faso	X	X	Indonesia	X		St.Vincent & the Grenadines	X	
Cameroon	X	X	Iran Islamic Rep.	X	X	Senegal	X	X
Cape Verde	X	X	Iraq	X	X	Sierra Leone	X	X
Centr.Afr.Rep.	X	X	Ireland	X	XX	Solomon Islands		X
Chad	X	X	Israel	X	XX	Spain	X	X
Chile	X	X	Italy	X		Sri Lanka	X	X
Colombia	X	XX	Jamaica		XX	Sudan	X	
Congo	X	X	Jordan	X		Sweden	X	XX
Costa Rica	X	X	Kenya	X	X	Switzerland	X	X
Côte d'Ivoire		X	Korea, Rep. of	X	X	Syria	X	X
Cuba	X	XX	Kuwait		X	Thailand	X	
Cyprus	X	X	Lebanon		X	Togo	X	
Czechoslovakia	X		Liberia	X	X	Tonga		X
Dem.P.R. of Korea	X	X	Libya	X	X	Tunisia	X	X
Denmark	X	XX	Liechtenstein		XX	Turkey	X	XX
Dominica	X	X	Madagascar	X	X	Uganda	X	
Dominican Republic	X	X	Malawi		X	United Kingdom	X	XX
Ecuador	X	X	Mali	X	X	Uruguay	X	
Egypt	X	XX	Mauritania	X	X	Venezuela	X	
El Salvador	X	X	Mauritius	X	X	Yemen A.R.	X	
Equatorial Guinea	X		Mexico	X	XX	Yemen P.D.R.		X
Ethiopia	X	XX	Morocco	X		Yugoslavia	X	XX
Fiji		X	Mozambique		X	Zambia	X	X
Finland	X	XX	Nepal		X	Zimbabwe		XX
			Netherlands	X	XX			

The above totals 119 countries which have become members of the Commission (96) or which have adhered to the International Undertaking (89) or both (67).

(XX is used for countries which have adhered to the International Undertaking with restrictions)

Appendix C

فائمة المندوبين والمراقبين
代表和观察员名单
LIST OF DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS
LISTE DES DELEGUES ET OBSERVATEURS
LISTA DE DELEGADOS Y OBSERVADORES

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Président	:	Horacio M. CARANDANG (PHILIPPINES)
Presidente	:	
النائب الأول للرئيس		
第一副主席		
First Vice-Chairman	:	
Premier Vice Président	:	José Miguel BOLIVAR (Spain)
Primero Vicepresidente	:	
النائب الثاني للرئيس		
第二副主席		
Second Vice-Chairman	:	
Deuxième Vice Président	:	Melaku WOREDE (Ethiopia)
Segundo Vicepresidente	:	

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MIEMBROS DE LA COMISION

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la FAO

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Bureau of Rural Resources
Ministry of Primary Industries
and Energy
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Permanent Representation of
Australia to FAO

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BANGLADESH

BARBADOS/BARBADE

BELIZE/BELICE

BENIN

BOLIVIA/BOLIVIE

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Ministry of Agriculture
Alternate
Dennis M. WANCHINGA GABORONE
Manpower and Training Officer
Southern African Centre for
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Research

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 Alternate Permanent Representative
 to FAO
 Alternate
 Igor KIPMAN ROME
 Alternate Permanent Representative
 to FAO

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 Ministry of Agriculture
 Alternate
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 CENTRAFRICAINE/REPUBLICA CENTROAFRICANA

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 Primer Secretario
 Embajada de Chile

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 Embajador de Colombia ante la FAO
 Suplentes
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 Primer Secretario
 Representación Permanente de
 Colombia ante la FAO
 Mery HURTADO (Sta.) ROMA
 Tercer Secretario
 Representación Permanente de
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 CECOSLOVAQUIA

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 Ladislav DOTLACIL PRAGUE
 Head of Czechoslovak Gene Bank
 Federal Ministry of Food and
 Agriculture

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLES'S REPUBLIC OF
 KOREA/REPUBLIQUE POPULAIRE DEMOCRATIQUE DE
 COREE/REPUBLICA POPULAR DEMOCRATICA DE
 COREA

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DOMINICAINE/REPUBLICA DOMINICANA

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ROMA

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to FAO

ROME

مصر

ممثل

يوسف أحمد حمدي

الممثل الدائم المناوب روما

لدى المنظمة

EL SALVADOR

EQUATORIAL GUINEA/GUINEE EQUATORIALE/
GUINEA ECUATORIAL

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ADDIS ABABA

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HELSINKI

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technologie

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ALLEMAGNE, REPUBLIQUE FEDERALE D'/
ALEMANIA, REPUBLICA FEDERAL DE

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BONN

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REP.ISLAMIQUE/IRAN, REP.ISLAMICA

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to FAO

العراق

ممثل

توفيق أحمد حسن المسهداني
الممثل الدائم
المناوب لدى المنظمة
روما

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de l'environnement
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PORTUGAL

RWANDA

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CHRISTOPHE-ET-NEVIS/SAN CRISTOBAL Y
NIEVES

SAINT LUCIA/SAINTE-LUCIE/SANTA LUCIA

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES/
SAINT-VINCENT-ET-GRENADINES/
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ROMA

MADRID

ROMA

SRI LANKA

SUDAN/SOUDAN

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Isam Eldin Mohamed EL SAYED
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to FAO

ROME

المغرب

ممثل

مناوب

عصام الدين محمد السيد روما
الممثل الدائم المناوب لدى المنظمة

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SYRIENNE/REPUBLICA ARABE SIRIA

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TOGO

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تونس
ممثل

روما عمر بن رمضان
الممثل الدائم لتونس لدى المنظمة

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VENEZUELA

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周启疆

驻粮农组织副代表

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GHANA

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PARAGUAY

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ante la FAO
Diego DISTEFANO MONACO ROME
Segundo Secretario
Embajada del Paraguay

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Office of International Cooperation
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Department of Agriculture
Henry L. SHANDS WASHINGTON
National Program Leader for
Plant Germplasm
Agricultural Research Service
Department of Agriculture
William SCHAPAUGH WASHINGTON
Executive Vice President
American Seed Trade Association
Roberta VAN HAEFTEN (Mrs.) ROME
Agricultural Attaché, Alternate
Permanent Representative to FAO

YEMEN, PEOPLE'S DEM. REPUBLIC OF/
YEMEN, REPUBLIQUE DEM POPULAIRE DU/
YEMEN, REP. DEMOCRATICA POPULAR DEL

Anwar KHALED ROME
Ambassador to FAO

جمهورية اليمن الديمقراطية الشعبية

أنور خالد

سفير اليمن لدى المنظمة روما

ZAIRE

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Permanent Observer of the U.S.S.R.
to FAO
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First Secretary, Observer of the
U.S.S.R. to FAO

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REPRESENTANTS DES NATIONS UNIES ET INSTITUTIONS SPECIALISEES/
REPRESENTANTES DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS Y ORGANISMOS ESPECIALIZADOS

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME/
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR
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INDUSTRIEL/ORGANIZACION DE LAS NACIONES
UNIDAS PARA EL DESARROLLO INDUSTRIAL

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Department for Industrial Promotion,
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EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE EUROPEENNE
COMUNIDAD ECONOMICA EUROPEA

D. OBST BRUXELLES
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Gian Paolo PAPA ROME
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OBSERVATEURS DES ORGANISATIONS INTERGOUVERNEMENTALES/
OBSERVADORES DE LAS ORGANIZACIONES INTERGUBERNAMENTALES

COMITE DE ACCION PARA LA COOPERACION Y
CONCERTACION LATINOAMERICANA EN MATERIA DE
GERMOPLASMA VEGETAL (RECURSOS
FITOGENETICOS) (CARFIT)

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UNION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NEW VARIETIES
OF PLANTS/UNION POUR LA PROTECTION DES
OBTENTIONS VEGETALES/UNION PARA
LA PROTECCION DE LAS OBTENTIONES VEGETALES
(UPOV)

Barry GREENGRASS GENEVA
Secrétaire général adjoint

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OBSERVATEURS DES ORGANISATIONS NON GOUVERNEMENTALES/
OBSERVADORES DE LAS ORGANIZACIONES NO GUBERNAMENTALES

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PLANT
BREEDERS FOR THE PROTECTION OF PLANT
VARIETIES/ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES
SELECTIONNEURS POUR LA PROTECTION DES
OBTENTIONS VEGETALES/ASOCIACION
INTERNACIONAL FITOGENETISTA PARA LA
PROTECCION DE VARIEDADES DE PLANTAS
(ASSINSEL)

Alexander MENAMKAT NYON
Assistant Secretary General

INTERNATIONAL BOARD FOR PLANT GENETIC
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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH IN THE DRY AREAS/CENTRE INTER-
NATIONAL DE RECHERCHE AGRICOLE DANS LES
ZONES ARIDES/CENTRO INTERNACIONAL DE
INVESTIGACION AGRICOLA EN LAS ZONAS
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Paolo LOMBARDI ROME
Head of WWF-Italy
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Appendix D

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

CPGR/89/1	Provisional annotated agenda
CPGR/89/2 Rev. 1	Proposed timetable
CPGR/89/3	Report by the Chairman of the Working Group on its third meeting
CPGR/89/4	Progress report on legal arrangements with a view to the establishment of an international network of base collections in genebanks under the auspices or jurisdiction of FAO
CPGR/89/5	Overall review of FAO's activities in plant genetic resources and progress report on the establishment of the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources
CPGR/89/6	IBPGR activities
CPGR/89/7	Assessment of the current coverage of base collections in the world, with regard to crops of interest to developing countries
CPGR/89/8	Assessment of progress in <u>in situ</u> conservation of plant genetic resources
CPGR/89/9	Implications of new biotechnologies for the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources
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CPGR/89/11	FAO relationship with IBPGR
CPGR/89/12	Progress report on the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources - Report by the Chairman of the Working Group on the negotiations for an agreed interpretation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources
CPGR/89/Inf.1	List of Delegates and Observers
CPGR/89/Inf.2	International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources
CPGR/89/Inf.3	Establishment of a Commission on Plant Genetic Resources
CPGR/89/Inf.4	Members of the Commission and/or countries which have adhered to the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ITS THIRD MEETING

The Third Session of the Working Group was held under my chairmanship on 13 and 14 April 1989. This Third Session of the Working Group was attended by representatives of the following countries: Cape Verde, the Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Italy, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Spain, Thailand, Tunisia and Venezuela. Australia, Indonesia, Libya, Peru, Sweden and Yugoslavia were unable to attend despite the fact that they are member countries of this Working Group. The Assistant Director-General, Agriculture Department, Dr Bonte-Friedheim, again welcomed participants and highlighted the items of interest on the Agenda of the Commission, also reporting the decision of the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources to change its headquarters from FAO in Rome to Copenhagen, Denmark. The Working Group decided to concentrate its discussions on Agenda Items 6 and 4, in that order, and also to study the situation arising out of the decision by IBPGR to leave FAO Headquarters. The Working Group's debates took place in a very positive and particularly cordial atmosphere of harmony and cooperation, concerned above all with constructiveness and compromise. I give below a summary of the Working Group's discussions and conclusions, confident that these will facilitate the work of the Commission.

The Working Group considered that the document CPGR/89/5, "Overall Review of FAO's Activities in Plant Genetic Resources and Progress Report on the Establishment of the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources", was of fundamental importance, since it provided extremely valuable information on the historical and legal background to FAO activities and the functions of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and identified the elements needed to streamline the future work of this Commission. The Working Group appreciated FAO's pioneering work since 1947 and considered that the Organization had in recent years developed a unique and irreplaceable global system for plant genetic resources, which included: i) a legal framework, the International Undertaking, intended to ensure the preservation, use and availability of these resources; ii) a genuine inter-governmental forum, the Commission, which included representatives of countries donating germ-plasm and also those donating funds and technology, and where discussions could be held and a consensus reached on subjects of global interest. The main function of the Commission was to keep under constant review the general situation of world plant genetic resources and to supervise progress in attaining the objectives of the Undertaking; iii) a financial mechanism, the International Fund, to apply the principles of the Undertaking within a system of mutual and equitable benefits, to which some countries contributed with germ-plasm and others with funds and technology.

The Working Group recommends that the Commission adopt the report CPGR/89/5 and support the streamlining proposed in the work of this Commission, as reflected in paragraphs 22 to 44 of this document. To this end, it considers necessary: i) the presentation to the Commission of periodical reports on the activities, programmes and policies of FAO as regards plant genetic resources; ii) the periodical preparation for presentation to the Commission of a report on the world status of plant genetic resources; iii) development of a global system of information and early warning as foreseen in Article 7 of the International Undertaking.

The information system will provide the basis for the preparation of the report on the world status of plant genetic resources; iv) development of an International Network of Plant Genetic Resource Centres, and in particular a network of base collections under the auspices and/or jurisdiction of FAO, already envisaged in Article 7 of the Undertaking. This subject will be discussed by the Commission under Agenda Items 5 and 8; v) the preparation of a Plan of Action that will, on the basis of the information provided in the report on the world state of plant genetic resources, identify periodically existing lacunae and facilitate coordination and the according of priority to the necessary activities. This Plan of Action could have characteristics and organization similar to the Tropical Forestry Action Plan.

The Working Group is fully aware that the activities set out in points ii) to v) above have to be conducted in close collaboration with other regional, international and non-governmental organizations involved in this subject: UNEP, CGIAR, CARFIT, IBPGR, IUCN, WWF, etc., and therefore recommends setting up a mechanism for dialogue to establish this cooperation in a systematic way, possibly through an Advisory Committee, provided this is not a financial burden on FAO's Regular Programme.

The Working Group also viewed with concern the proliferation of initiatives referred to in paragraphs 26 and 27 of the document, which could lead to unnecessary duplication and therefore less efficiency. It considered that the Commission had a fundamental role to play here, harmonizing these initiatives and proposing systematic cooperation between the groups involved. The dialogue mechanism (Advisory Committee) referred to above could contribute decisively to achieving this objective.

The Group considered that one important function to be performed by the Commission was the preparation of international agreements on the preservation and use of plant genetic resources, such as: a code of conduct for international germ-plasm collectors, setting out uniform minimum standards for the storage of germ-plasm in base collections, a code of conduct on the application of biotechnology to plant genetic resources, regulation of trials with modified organisms through genetic engineering and their releasing into the environment, and also agreements on systematic financing of the preservation of plant genetic resources.

The last point made by the Working Group on this item was that it considered as an essential function of the Commission the promoting of national and regional cooperation structures and of cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

The Group then started to debate Item 4, "Progress Report on the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources". This item follows a mandate from the Second Session of the Commission to this Working Group to negotiate "an agreed interpretation of the International Undertaking". The main recommendation of the Working Group to the Commission on this item is the simultaneous and parallel recognition of the rights of the breeder and the farmer and the use of the FAO International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources as a channel through which these rights may benefit the farmer, supporting preservation activities and the use of plant genetic resources in

developing countries. I shall provide further details on the Working Group's discussions and conclusions on this item, which is of cardinal importance, under the relevant point in the agenda, which I shall have the honour to introduce.

The last item analysed by the Working Group was the information provided by Dr Bonte-Friedheim with regard to the decision of the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources to leave FAO Headquarters. The Working Group decided not to study this item in depth, since it considered that the many questions and concerns aroused should be discussed in the presence of the IBPGR and during the debates of the Commission, allowing an opportunity to IBPGR representatives to reply to them. The Working Group nevertheless expressed its surprise and concern that a decision of this nature should have been taken without previous consultation and discussion with FAO and despite the fact that this Organization has hosted IBPGR and provided it with technical, economic, operational and administrative facilities and above all political and legal cover since its creation 15 years ago. The surprise of the Working Group increased when they heard from countries financing IBPGR and present at the meeting that they had not been previously consulted either, or even officially informed of such an important decision. Some delegates questioned the value of a decision taken by members of IBPGR who were there in their personal capacity and did not represent any country. The Working Group considered that the IBPGR decision concerned both countries donating funds and those donating germ-plasm and that the implications of this decision should be discussed in the Commission.

The Group expressed its concern over the possible negative effects that the IBPGR decision could have on the climate of growing harmony and cooperation so necessary to ensure security and free access to germ-plasm. Many members of the Working Group also asked questions about the financial, administrative and legal consequences that the decision could have for FAO and for staff with FAO contracts at present working in IBPGR, and expressed its concern as to the fate of the files, data banks, documents and publications that were the fruit of so many years of cooperation between FAO and IBPGR. In this connection they stressed the additional complication because of the lack of legal staff on IBPGR.

As Chairman of the Working Group I consider that we should avoid any unilateral decision by IBPGR that might disturb the good relations between FAO and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, and I should like to make the point that this decision has not yet been endorsed by the Consultative Group.

Lastly, the Working Group discussed whether Agenda Item 7, which is a technical item on IBPGR, should be presented to the Commission before or after it had studied the item of the physical separation of IBPGR. Although not all members were in agreement, it appeared desirable to advise the Commission that IBPGR activities should be discussed first so that the type and extension of these activities could be objectively evaluated, thus obtaining the necessary elements to analyse the importance of relations with FAO to those activities and the implications that a separation could have,

before making appropriate recommendations. Although some of you may justifiably feel tempted to request an inversion in the order of discussion, I should like to make an appeal that it be maintained in accordance with the recommendation of the Working Group so that, on an item as important as the one which now concerns us, rationality and objectivity may predominate over emotional positions which, however justified they may be, will not help us in our discussions.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR AN AGREED INTERPRETATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

At its Second Session in 1987, the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources requested the Working Group to proceed with negotiations to reach an agreed interpretation of the Undertaking that would include simultaneous and parallel recognition of breeder rights and farmer rights. The objective of this agreed interpretation of the Undertaking is to achieve greater acceptance of the latter and to strengthen the preservation, use and availability of germ-plasm through mechanisms recognizing and legitimizing the rights of both germ-plasm donors and funds and technology donors to be compensated. This would facilitate the withdrawal of reserves any countries may have with regard to the Undertaking, and would secure the adhesion of others and lay the bases for an equitable, and therefore solid and lasting, global system. To establish this system, and without prejudice to the continuation of negotiations under way, the Working Group proposes that the Commission make:

- (a) A statement recognizing that plant breeders' rights as provided for under UPOV are not incompatible with the International Undertaking;
- (b) A statement to the effect that a state may impose only such minimum restrictions on the free exchange of materials covered by Article 2.1(a) of the International Undertaking as are necessary for it to conform to its national and international obligations;
- (c) A statement to the effect that states adhering to the Undertaking recognize the enormous contribution that farmers of all regions have made to the conservation and development of plant genetic resources, which constitute the basis of plant production throughout the world;
- (d) A statement to the effect that the adhering states consider that the best way to compensate farmers for their work in the past, present and future is to ensure the conservation, management and use of their plant genetic resources. This could be achieved through the medium of the International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources already established by FAO. To ensure a sound financial basis and to reflect the responsibility of those countries that have benefitted most from the use of the germplasm, the Fund could be supplemented by mandatory contributions from adhering governments; for example taking into account such factors as the volume of sales of seeds from national and multinational companies in those countries. The International Fund should be used to support plant genetic conservation, management and utilization programmes within developing countries, and particularly in those which are important sources of plant genetic material. Special priority should be placed on intensified educational programmes for biotechnology specialists and strengthening the capabilities of developing countries in genetic resource conservation and management, as well as the improvement of plant breeding and seed production.

It is understood that

- (i) the term free access does not mean free of charge, and
- (ii) the benefits to be derived under the International Undertaking are part of a reciprocal system and should be limited to countries adhering to the International Undertaking.

The Working Group agreed in recognizing the need to define and direct the concept of farmer rights in order to avoid divergent and erroneous interpretations and to ensure that this concept benefited society in general. It therefore proposed that the Commission adopt the attached text, which is the fruit of discussion and consensus by the Working Group.

The Working Group recorded its concern over the escalation of laws restricting the free exchange of germ-plasm (which, particularly in recent years, has become increasingly widespread) on the grounds of providing greater incentives for researchers in various countries, and expressed the wish that the present system of competitiveness in this matter should be replaced or complemented by a system of cooperation moving toward standardized, rational and objective international legislation that would ensure the preservation, use and free exchange of germ-plasm in the short, medium and long term for the benefit of society as a whole. To this end, the negotiations under way should continue.

The Working Group of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources

Recognizing that:

- (a) plant genetic resources are a common heritage of mankind to be preserved, and to be freely available for use, for the benefit of present and future generations;
- (b) full advantage can be derived from plant genetic resources through an effective programme of plant breeding, and that, while most such resources in the form of wild plants and old land races are to be found in developing countries, training and facilities for plant survey and identification and plant breeding are insufficient or even not available in many of those countries;
- (c) plant genetic resources are indispensable for the genetic improvement of cultivated plants, but have been insufficiently explored and are in danger of erosion and loss;

Considering that:

- (a) in the history of mankind unnumbered generations of farmers have conserved, improved and made available plant genetic resources;
- (b) the majority of these plant genetic resources come from developing countries, where the farmers have not sufficiently been compensated or rewarded for their efforts;
- (c) the farmers in developing countries must benefit fully and not only partially from the improved and increased use of the natural resources they have preserved;

(d) there is a need to continue the conservation (in situ and ex situ), development and use of the plant genetic resources in developing countries.

Endorses:

The concept of farmers' rights¹


- to ensure that the need for conservation is globally recognized and that sufficient funds for these purposes will be available;
- to assist farmers and farming communities in all regions of the world, but especially in the areas of origin/diversity of plant genetic resources, in the protection and conservation of their plant genetic resources and of the natural biosphere;
- to allow farmers, their communities and countries in all regions to participate fully in the benefits derived at present and in the future from the improved use of plant genetic resources through plant breeding and other scientific methods.

¹ Farmers' rights mean rights to compensation arising from the past, present and future contributions of farmers, particularly those in the centres of origin/diversity of plant genetic resources, in conserving, improving and making available those resources. These rights are vested in the International Community as trustee for present and future generations of farmers, for the purpose of ensuring full benefits to farmers and supporting the continuation of their contributions as well as the attainment of the overall purposes of the International Undertaking.

Appendix G

DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE FOURTH SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

1. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairmen
2. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable for the Session
3. Report of Working Group
4. The State of the World on Plant Genetic Resources
5. Review of FAO policy, programmes and activities on Plant Genetic Resources
6. Progress reports
 - i) International Undertaking
 - ii) International Fund on Plant Genetic Resources
 - iii) Global information system and early warning system on plant genetic resources
 - iv) Internationally coordinated network of centres including the FAO network of base collections
 - v) In situ conservation
7. Selected policy issues
 - i) Biotechnology and Plant Genetic Resources
 - ii) Biodiversity and Plant Genetic Resources
8. Future work programme of the Commission
9. Other business
10. Date and place of next session
11. Adoption of the report

	منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة	CPGR/89/11 April 1989
	联合国粮食及农业组织	
	FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS	
	ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ALIMENTATION ET L'AGRICULTURE	
	ORGANIZACION DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA LA AGRICULTURA Y LA ALIMENTACION	

COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

Third Session

Rome, 17 - 21 April 1989, Green Room

FAO RELATIONSHIP WITH IBPGR

Introduction

1. On 24 February 1989 the IBPGR Board of Trustees adopted the following motion:

"The further development of IBPGR as a fully autonomous, independently administered, International Center in the CGIAR system would greatly enhance

- i) its capacity to carry out its scientific mandate and,
- ii) its ability to attract strong and continuing financial support.

Therefore, provided mutually acceptable arrangements can be put in place, the Board of Trustees accepts with pleasure the kind invitation of Denmark (ref. 73.C.27.1/6 from Dr. Klaus Winkel dated 3 February 1989 to Dr. W.J. Peacock) to locate the headquarters of IBPGR in or near scientific institutes in Copenhagen".

2. The Director-General received confirmation of the IBPGR decision by letter from the Chairman of the CGIAR. This letter and the Director-General's reply are attached. A letter was also sent to the Director-General by the newly appointed Chairman of IBPGR, expressing the wish to discuss with FAO the follow-up arrangements to the Board's decision and reaffirming the strong desire of the IBPGR to maintain its cooperation with the Organization. In view of its importance and of its implications, the Director-General decided to inform the CPGR and seek its guidance on the future FAO/IBPGR relationship.

Background

3. FAO, since 1947, has been much concerned about the consequences of loss of genetic variability of crops useful to mankind. In pursuant to decisions of its Governing Bodies, FAO established a Panel of Experts on Plant Exploration and Introduction in 1965 to advise the Director-General on new lines of action to deal with the problem, and to expand the exchange of information and plant material between the countries and scientific institutions. A similar Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources was established in 1968. In the same year FAO also established a Crop Ecology and Genetic Resources Unit to deal with activities related to collections, conservation and documentation of genetic resources.

4. The Technical Conferences on Genetic Resources and the FAO Panel of Experts recommended that a global network of crop genetic resources centres should be established. The United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 gave FAO responsibility to assist in the establishment of an international genetic resources programme.

5. FAO submitted a proposal to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in October 1971 to establish a mechanism to encourage, coordinate and support action to conserve genetic resources and make them available for use. In March 1972 TAC established an ad hoc Working Group of leading scientists which met in Beltsville, Maryland, USA. This group proposed the creation, over a period, of a network of genetic resources centres comprising a Coordinating Committee with a central staff as its executing arm. The general action programme of the Beltsville report was substantially revised and endorsed by TAC. The CGIAR agreed to take action to establish the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR) to promote and assist in the worldwide effort to collect and conserve the plant germplasm needed for future research and production.

Creation of IBPGR at FAO

6. A number of members of CGIAR felt that the coordinating functions outlined in the Beltsville report were so closely related to FAO's basic responsibilities that FAO should be charged with providing the central coordinating staff out of its Regular Programme budget.

7. Further negotiations between the CGIAR sub-committee and the FAO Director-General and his representatives in Rome in October 1973 resulted in the following general agreement:

first, the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR) would be created as an independent entity, reporting to the CGIAR through TAC and receiving funds through the CGIAR system;

second, the headquarters of the IBPGR would be at FAO headquarters, and FAO should provide the Secretariat of the Board;

third, a central trust fund should be created to finance the expenses of the Board, additional Secretariat assistance if needed, and such programme activities as the Board might decide could be better financed through such a fund rather than through bilateral or United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) financing. The central fund was to be administered by FAO as a trust fund without charge, at least for the first year, but disposition of the fund was to be put entirely under the control of the Board;

fourth, the Board would consist of 14 members (at least four from developing countries) one of whom would be a non-voting member appointed by FAO;

fifth, the Chairman of the Board, who might be from outside the Board's membership, would be selected by the Board in consultation with the Director-General of FAO.

8. The report of the Seventeenth Session of the FAO Conference in 1973 stated "Recognizing FAO's role in activities in the genetic resources field and the importance of coordination, the Conference endorsed the recommendation that FAO should provide headquarters facilities for the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources, established by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, as well as the location of the Secretariat of this Board, in the Genetic Resources Unit with financing by the Board through extra-budgetary funds, and requested that the Council be kept informed of the Board's activities".

9. Subsequently, in June 1974, a Letter of Agreement between the donors of the CGIAR (viz., Germany F.R., the Netherlands, Sweden and the U.K.) and FAO was signed. This agreement was drawn up for the purpose of creating a central fund to finance

the activities of the IBPGR. Even though this agreement was initially for one year, it was tacitly renewed and remained operational until a new Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 27 February 1987.

10. These developments brought forth an international organization, the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR), under the FAO umbrella and with minimum formality and bureaucracy. Thus the IBPGR became operational at FAO headquarters in Rome in June 1974. In order to assure consistency between IBPGR's programme and FAO's own genetic resources work, the Chief of FAO's Crop Ecology and Genetic Resources Unit was designated to serve concurrently as Secretary of the IBPGR (in 1978 designated as the Executive Secretary), and the programme of FAO's Unit was reoriented to enable it to undertake the coordinating functions proposed by the Beltsville report. The inter-relationship between FAO and IBPGR thus introduced a new dimension into international activities in the development of a global network of plant genetic resources centres.

11. During its formative years, the IBPGR needed support from FAO for most of its field work and this is true even to date. In addition to providing a central co-ordinating mechanism for the IBPGR - the Crop Ecology and Genetic Resources Unit (later this unit became Crop Genetic Resources Centre) - the FAO country programmes provide much needed administrative support for IBPGR field projects. This assistance cannot be estimated in monetary terms, and there is no doubt that IBPGR was able to develop an effective programme due to the strong support it received from FAO.

IBPGR Achievements

12. During the first decade of its operation the IBPGR accomplished a great deal in various spheres of its operation. A few examples of these achievements are as follows:

- generated interest in, and awareness of, genetic resources conservation in many countries around the world;
- furthered the cause of conservation at technical level by means of meetings and publications;
- supported numerous exploration and collecting missions in the centres of diversity for major crops including cereals, legumes, vegetables, industrial crops, fruit trees and forages;
- supported research on problems related to genetic resources and developed scientific and operational standards for conservation of germplasm;
- assisted several national programmes in the establishment of national conservation facilities and documentation systems;
- established a network of base collections;
- encouraged and supported national programmes to initiate characterization and evaluation of germplasm and also the establishment of crop data bases;
- provided training fellowships and organized training courses to increase the manpower for genetic resources conservation.

Recent Developments

13. There were substantial benefits derived from the close association which has existed between FAO and IBPGR since 1974. In fact the programmes of IBPGR and FAO were co-terminous, but with the increase in the programme and activities of the IBPGR, the Board of IBPGR felt that it needed a different organizational and staffing structure. Following the External Programme and Management Review, carried out in 1984-85, the Board of IBPGR has been transformed into a Board of Trustees and a new staffing structure was adopted, in particular to strengthen IBPGR's research capabilities. At the same time the Executive Secretary of IBPGR was redesignated as Director. Since that period IBPGR was considering alternative arrangements to become a fully autonomous and independent CGIAR centre.

14. A series of discussions at various levels between IBPGR/CGIAR and FAO resulted in a negotiated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between IBPGR and FAO in February 1987. According to the MOU, the IBPGR has offered to take over the funding of professional staff, hitherto provided by FAO's Regular Programme, and thus all the IBPGR professional staff are engaged full time for activities defined by the IBPGR Board of Trustees, and FAO has agreed to apply to IBPGR-funded staff more flexible arrangements which govern the administration of field projects.

15. The Trust Fund of IBPGR continued to be administered without any overheads. These arrangements were on a trial period of one year. The situation was reviewed in 1988 and due to the financial situation of FAO and increasing autonomy requested by IBPGR, FAO suggested the following modifications/amendments for the next phase starting on 1 January 1989: (i) FAO no longer to provide or finance IBPGR professional or general service staff; (ii) FAO to charge, and IBPGR to pay, for all services rendered by FAO at a reduced agency cost rate of 5 percent of total expenditure; and (iii) IBPGR to pay rent for allotted headquarters space. The amended agreement is expected to be in effect until the end of 1990.

Separation of IBPGR from FAO

16. During 1988-89 the Chairman of the Board of the IBPGR contacted a few donor countries, viz., Denmark, Switzerland and Italy as possible future hosts for IBPGR headquarters. According to the information available it appears that the Governments of Italy and Switzerland did not react or were in the process of considering the issue; however, the Government of Denmark sent a letter to the Chairman of IBPGR reacting favourably to the IBPGR request. In view of the Danish Government's invitation the IBPGR Board of Trustees on 24 February 1989 adopted the motion accepting this invitation as indicated in paragraph 1 above.

FAO's Position

17. The Director-General regrets that FAO as the host of the IBPGR Secretariat since 1974, and co-sponsor of the CGIAR, was not consulted in advance on this decision.

18. This decision, if implemented, will have a number of implications for the future programmes of IBPGR and FAO in this field, related to coordination and costs. In particular, the Director-General is concerned about the possible adverse effects which this decision may have on the developing countries and their full access to all necessary genetic material, information and data, publications and technical assistance.

19. The Director-General is also concerned about the financial and administrative implications of this decision as regards the IBPGR staff (who are FAO staff members). The cost of their separation or redeployment if, for one reason or another they are not transferred to the new IBPGR Headquarters in Denmark, could reach \$800,000. Other financial commitments which would be left with FAO on IBPGR's departure are connected with the rental agreement for IBPGR premises and amount to approximately \$350,000 per year or \$1.1 million for a three-year period. Moreover, the fate of the IBPGR files, data banks, and the FAO/IBPGR joint publications which were established during the many years of FAO/IBPGR cooperation, will have to be determined.

20. In view of the complexities of the matter, the Director-General has decided to establish an internal committee to examine all the possible implications and make proposals for ensuring that all the commitments which FAO has taken on behalf of IBPGR will be honoured by the IBPGR donors. As IBPGR has no legal status it is not clear whether the Board of IBPGR or the CGIAR Secretariat could provide the necessary formal assurances that the departure of the IBPGR from FAO will be at no cost to the Organization or whether FAO will have to approach donors including the World Bank. The Director-General would welcome the views and advice of the CPGR in this respect.

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

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March 8, 1989

Dr. Edouard Saouma
Director General
Food & Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
Via delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome, ITALY

Dear Dr. Saouma,

I was surprised to learn last week from the new chairman of the IBPGR, Bill Tossell, that the board had decided, to recommend moving the center to Denmark. We all were aware that alternatives were being considered, but I certainly did not expect anything to happen this quickly. It is an instance, I suppose, of the ambiguity between the CGIAR principle of board autonomy and that other CGIAR principle of working through consensus.

While I might have preferred a different approach to the matter, and for that matter a different outcome, the board is undoubtedly within its authority to take the action it has. Nor would it be appropriate, given all of the history, for me to intervene strongly to attempt to persuade the Group to act one way or another on the board's recommendation.

It is critical, however, that whatever administrative arrangements are made, the technical collaboration between FAO and IBPGR continue to be open, extensive and effective. I am writing, therefore, to propose that we work together to ensure that the technical collaboration continues, and also that there is a minimum amount of damaging controversy as the issue is formally resolved over the coming months. Bill Tossell assures me that the IBPGR itself has the same desires.

In closing, let me say to you directly what I am sure is a sentiment generally shared in the CGIAR: how indebted we are to the FAO for its support to the conservation and utilization of plant germplasm through organizational and financial resources provided over the years to the IBPGR. We appreciate particularly the efforts made in recent years to deal with some of the problems that emerged as the role of the IBPGR changed. I am

/Continued...

Dr. Edouard Saouma
Director General, Food & Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy

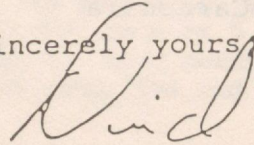
March 8, 1989

- 2 -

confident that support will be no less important in the future, though perhaps in different forms, than in the past, whatever may be the ultimate ending of the path on which the IBPGR has now engaged.

I am copying this letter to the Cosponsors of the CGIAR and to the Chairman and Director of the IBPGR.

Sincerely yours,



W. David Hopper
Chairman

copies Messrs. C. H. Bonte-Friedheim, Michel J. Petit,
Timothy Rothermel, Cosponsors
Dr. William E. Tossell, Chairman, IBPGR
Dr. J. Trevor Williams, Director, IBPGR

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The Director-General

AGD-DG/89/400

Rome 12. IV. 89

Dear Mr. Hopper,

Thank you for your letter of 8 March 1989 regarding the recent decision of the IBPGR to move to Copenhagen.

The possibility of the Board leaving Rome and the framework of FAO has been under discussion for several years. For my part, I recognize that there are difficulties in running a CGIAR-sponsored International Agricultural Research Centre within the relatively inflexible administrative framework of a UN specialized agency - although I should add that the UN framework does offer a number of compensating advantages. With the increasing scale of the IBPGR's activities, the difficulties have become more obvious to both sides. The Memorandum of Understanding between FAO and the IBPGR signed on 27 February 1987 represented a serious effort by all concerned to meet the problems which were emerging, but we recognized at the time that it was only an interim solution. The Memorandum explicitly left open the longer-term issue of "whether it is the mutual desire of the two parties to maintain the present relationship between FAO and the IBPGR ... or to seek an alternative solution".

The establishment of the IBPGR as a separate institution outside the FAO framework thus appears to me as a natural and perhaps inevitable phase in its evolution.

On the other hand, I am seriously concerned over the manner in which the Board reached a specific decision on 24 February 1989 to move to Copenhagen. There was no prior consultation with FAO, and indeed the decision was taken in the absence of the ex-officio FAO Board member. Nor, to the best of my knowledge, was there any study of the implications for FAO, for the Board itself, and for the staff (who are all FAO staff members).

At this stage, I have two main concerns.

.../.

Mr. David Hopper
Chairman
CGIAR
1818 H Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433

Of over-riding importance, it seems to me, is the need to ensure that cooperation on substantive matters between the IBPGR and FAO goes ahead without dislocation, and in particular that there is no damage to the interests of developing countries.

In second place, I am concerned to ensure that the winding-up of the IBPGR's activities in Rome take place in an orderly manner, and that FAO is fully reimbursed for any costs it may incur including indemnities for the cancellation of contracts for services or contracts of staff. We have financial problems of our own, and I certainly cannot afford to be generous.

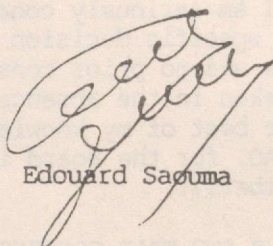
I shall be very glad to work with you, as you suggest, to ensure that technical collaboration continues, and also to minimize controversy. In my view, formal measures should be taken to establish a transitional period of one year (or as long as necessary) in which the transfer of the Board would be planned jointly by the several parties directly concerned, including FAO.

On the FAO side, the decision to accept the IBPGR as a part of the Organization was made by our Conference in 1973. Consequently, any major change in the relationship must, of course, be reported back to our Governing Bodies. I shall in the first instance be informing the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, which will be meeting in the next few days, and plan to make available to it the relevant documentation including your letter and this reply.

I would like to add that I have also received a letter from the new Chairman of the IBPGR indicating his strong desire for full consultation and close cooperation with FAO, and I hope to have a chance of discussing the matter with him next week.

In addition, I have noted that the May meeting of the CGIAR will discuss the proposed IBPGR move, and I shall be very much interested to learn the views of the CGIAR and the donors to the Board.

Yours sincerely,



Edouard Saguma

cc: Dr. William E. Tossell
Chairman
IBPGR Board of Trustees
c/o Centre for Food Security
University Ave. E
Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1

Mr. M.J. Petit
CGIAR Co-sponsor
World Bank
Washington, D.C. 20433

Mr. T. Rothermel
CGIAR Co-sponsor
UNDP
New York, NY 10017

Mr. J. Trevor Williams
Director
IBPGR
Rome

2 June 1989

My dear

I am most grateful to you and Pepe for your kind letter of 5th May enclosing the proceedings of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources. I congratulate you both on the most successful outcome, in this meeting. It is obvious that the hard and dedicated work you both have put in has paid rich dividends.

I would very much like to meet you both for an hour or two as soon as possible. I may be staying in Rome on the evening of Friday, June 16th on my way from Paris to Trieste again I will be passing through Rome on Sunday, the 18th June on my way from Trieste to Madras. In case you and Pepe will be in Rome between 16th to 18th June - please fix up a time and place where we can meet. You can get my programme by ringing up the following :

- 1) Ms Maria Teresa Mahdavi
Executive Secretary's Office
The Third World Academy of Sciences
Trieste (Italy)
Phone No.(040) 2240325
- 2) Ms Fiona Hanson
Avenue du Monti-Blanc CH-1196
Gland - Switzerland
Phone No. (022) 647181

Please inform both Maria Teresa and Fiona Hanson about the place and time of our meeting.

With warm personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Mr.N.Murthi Anishetty
Agricultural Officer
Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Via delle Terme di Caracalla,
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M.S. SWAMINATHAN



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CONFIDENTIAL

Rome, 5 May 1989

Dear Dr. Swaminathan,

The Third Session of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources concluded successfully and both Pepe (Esquinas-Alcázar) and myself are extremely happy with the outcome. From the enclosed news release you could note that the Commission has accepted a text for an agreed interpretation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources and with this development we expect wider acceptance/adherence by member governments of the United Nations. The press note indicates for the first time an intergovernmental body recognized the farmers' rights and recommended compensation for their contribution in conserving, improving and making available the germplasm for use. I am also attaching a copy of the Report of the Commission for your information.

You may have heard that the IBPGR has decided to separate from FAO and move to Copenhagen. This subject was discussed at the Commission and from the report you may note the feelings of the both donors of germplasm and donors of funds to IBPGR. It was most unfortunate and the decision of the IBPGR was untimely, and was taken without prior consultation with FAO and donor countries, hence discussion was largely on the issues such as negative impact on developing countries and at the haste with which such a far-reaching decision was taken. I am also attaching a document describing FAO/IBPGR relationship, which was tabled at the Commission meeting.

Both Pepe and myself will be happy to hear your views on several of the recommendations of the Commission and also we would like to seek your guidance in furthering the goals of the Commission.

../..

Dr. M.S. Swaminathan
President, International Union
for the Conservation of Nature
and Natural Resources
B4/142 Safdarjang Enclave
New Delhi 110029

This week the Committee on Agriculture has asked FAO to study the possibility of expanding the mandate of the Commission to include Animal Genetic Resources. A meeting of the Working Group of the Commission ~~will~~ *may* be convened in early October to consider this aspect.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

With best regards from Pepe and myself,

Yours sincerely,

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N. Murthi Anishetty
Agricultural Officer
Field Programme Support
Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service
Plant Production and Protection Division

*Best regards. Thank you
for your contribution, through
many different ways, to the
success of this meeting.
Hope to see you
soon
Pepe*



NEWS RELEASE

PR 89/13

FOR INFORMATION
MEDIA

NOT AN OFFICIAL
RECORD

FAO COMMISSION RECOGNIZES FARMERS' RIGHTS TO GENETIC VALUE OF
INDIGENOUS PLANT GERMPLASM; ADOPTS AGREED INTERPRETATION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES; FAO
DIRECTOR-GENERAL LAUDS DEVELOPMENT AS 'MILESTONE'

Rome, April 25 -- For the first time, an international body has recognized the right of Third World farmers to the genetic value of indigenous crops and recommended compensation for use of this germplasm in classical plant breeding and biotechnology, FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma announced today.

The third meeting of the Organization's Commission on Plant Genetic Resources drafted a resolution Friday for submission to the 158-nation FAO Conference in November, saying: "In the history of mankind, unnumbered generations of farmers have conserved, improved and made available plant genetic resources; the majority of these plant genetic resources come from developing countries, the contribution of whose farmers has not been sufficiently recognized or rewarded; the farmers, especially those in developing countries, should benefit fully from the improved and increased use of the natural resources they have preserved."

The FAO body also adopted the text of an "agreed interpretation" of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, aimed at removing some of the reservations expressed by some member countries, thereby opening the door to fuller adherence to the Undertaking. In this context, the Commission accorded recognition to farmers' rights on existing land races of crops developed by generations of farmers as well as to plant breeders' rights on newly bred plant varieties.

"This development is a milestone in international cooperation on plant genetic resources," FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma said in a statement. "It is a fruit of FAO's global system aimed at equitably benefitting both the donors of germplasm as well as the donors of funds and technology."

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Also for the first time, a United Nations body discussed the full implications of new biotechnologies for the use, conservation and free availability of germplasm. The delegates recognized the great potential value of these techniques for the conservation, development and use of plant germplasm. The Commission, however, was concerned about "the possibility of certain important tropical products -- such as vanilla, sugar and pyrethrum -- being substituted by genetically engineered products, to the detriment of countries currently producing these commodities. A further possibility was overproduction in the case of a number of commodities, such as vegetable oils, palm oil and coconuts."

The Commission expressed particular concern that the new biotechnologies might become subject to intellectual property protection in ways such as gene patenting which might harm the interests of Third World farmers, and urged assistance to strengthen the capability of developing countries to undertake research and development work in these fields.

In its final report, the Commission also expressed concern "over the escalation of laws restricting the free exchange of germplasm--- which, in recent years, has become increasingly widespread." It asked FAO to draft a Code of Conduct in Biotechnology as it affects conservation and use of plant genetic resources.

"This reflects the pioneering role which the international community continues to expect from FAO in promoting new concepts required for the concerted efforts to conserve, manage and utilize plant genetic resources for the benefit of humanity," Mr. Saouma said.

Delegates of 63 countries of the Commission participating in the meeting were alarmed about the current rate of loss of irreplaceable genetic resources worldwide, especially through the spreading of high-yielding crop varieties and "the high rate of deforestation in the tropics, which adversely affected the survival of wild plant and animal species," the report said. FAO was also requested to draft a Code of Conduct for international collectors of germplasm, to step up its efforts for the local "in situ" conservation of the wild relatives of annual crops, and to pay special attention to the species occurring in marginal and fragile ecosystems."

Also, FAO should "periodically prepare a report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources. Within its Global Information

System on Plant Genetic Resources, FAO should set up an Early Warning System to draw rapid attention to hazards threatening the operation of gene banks holding base collections, and the danger of the extinction of plant species and genetic diversity throughout the world."

The delegates agreed that FAO had developed, since 1983, a unique global system on Plant Genetic Resources consisting of a basic legal framework, the International Undertaking to ensure conservation, use and availability of plant germplasm; an intergovernmental forum, the Commission, and a financial mechanism for funding conservation work, plant breeding and seed production work, the International Fund.

The meeting was chaired by Horacio M. Carandang (Philippines).
