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**REPORTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL
CONFERENCE ON ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD
AND AGRICULTURE (INTERLAKEN, SWITZERLAND,
3-7 SEPTEMBER 2007) AND OF THE ELEVENTH REGULAR
SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (ROME, 11-15 JUNE 2007)
(Background information note submitted by France)**

1. The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), at its Tenth Regular Session in 2004, decided that *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* should be finalized at an International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources in 2007.¹ The FAO Council, at its Hundred and Twenty-seventh Session in 2004, welcomed the convening of the International Technical Conference.² In October 2005, the Director-General received and accepted the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host the International Conference on Animal Genetic Resources. The International Technical Conference, which took place in Interlaken, Switzerland, from 3 to 7 September 2007, welcomed *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and adopted the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, through the *Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources*.

¹ CGRFA-10/04/REP, paragraph 56.

² FAO-CL127/REP, paragraph 42.

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A. THE ELEVENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

2. The Eleventh Regular Session of the Commission focussed on preparations for the International Technical Conference (for which it acted as preparatory committee) and on the establishment of its Multi-Year Programme of Work, which foresees major outputs and milestones for all sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture, including animal genetic resources.³ The Commission agreed on the goals, outcomes and the draft provisional agenda of the Interlaken Conference. It considered *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and requested that this be presented to the Interlaken Conference.

3. The Commission reviewed strategic priorities for action and forwarded them to the International Technical Conference, for consideration as part of a *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*. In addition, the Commission reviewed a document on the implementation and financing of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, and the draft *Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources*, and decided to forward both texts to the International Technical Conference, where they were finalized and adopted

4. Recognizing the need to implement its full mandate that, since 1995, covers “all components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture” (FAO Conference Resolution 3/95), the Commission adopted major outputs and milestones to be addressed in its next five sessions, as components of its rolling, ten-year Multi-Year Programme of Work on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture.⁴ The Multi-Year Programme of Work covers all sectors of genetic resources, including animal genetic resources, aquatic genetic resources, forest genetic resources, and the genetic resources of micro-organisms and invertebrates, as well as cross-sectorial issues, such as access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources for food and agriculture. In adopting its Multi-year Programme of Work, the Commission made specific provision to follow up on the outcomes of the International Technical Conference, and to monitor and oversee the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*.

B. THE INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL CONFERENCE ON ANIMAL GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

5. The International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture was supported with funds from Australia, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Spain and the host of the Conference, Switzerland. The International Technical Conference was attended by delegations from 109 countries and 42 inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations.

6. The International Technical Conference congratulated FAO for coordinating the preparation of *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*⁵,

³ CGRFA-11/07/Report, available at: <http://www.fao.org/ag/cgrfa/cgrfa11.htm>.

⁴ CGRFA-11/07/Report, *Appendix E*.

⁵ FAO. 2007. *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, edited by Barbara Rischkowsky & Dafydd Pilling. Rome.

noting that it would enhance understanding of the roles and values of animal genetic resources. Numerous countries, non-governmental organizations and individual scientists actively participated in the country-driven process for the preparation of *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, under the overall guidance of the Commission. A total of 169 governments prepared Country Reports, assessing the status of their animal genetic resources, as well as national capacity to care for and utilize these resources. Reports were also submitted by relevant international organizations. In addition, FAO commissioned twelve major thematic studies. Regional training and follow-up workshops were conducted between July 2001 and November 2004. The International Technical Conference stressed that preparation of this authoritative survey was an important step in achieving the improved management of animal genetic resources, including enhancing the basis for further policy development. The International Technical Conference urged FAO to continue to lead global updating of the status and trends of animal genetic resources, and to support developing countries in this process. It highlighted the importance of translating *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* into all other official FAO languages, thanked China for having prepared a Chinese translation, and urged donors to make available resources for this.

7. The International Technical Conference formally adopted the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources* and the *Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources*. The *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*⁶ consists of three parts: the Rationale for the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*; *Strategic Priorities for Action*; and *Implementation and Financing of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*:

- *Rationale*: The *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources* aims to provide a framework, agreed by the international community, to support and increase the overall effectiveness of national, regional and global efforts for the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources, and to facilitate mobilization of resources, including adequate financial resources, development of institutions, human resources and cooperative frameworks. It aims to promote a pragmatic, systematic and efficient overall approach, which harmoniously addresses these issues.
- *Strategic Priorities*: There are 23 Strategic Priorities, clustered into four Strategic Priority Areas:
 - Area 1: Characterization, inventory and monitoring of trends and associated risks;
 - Area 2: Sustainable use and development;
 - Area 3: Conservation; and
 - Area 4: Policies, institutions and capacity-building.

Each Strategic Priority is introduced by a brief rationale which draws upon the findings of the preparatory process, and summarizes the reasons why this is a priority. Each Strategic Priority includes, in addition, individual actions which propose steps to achieve the desired outcomes or improvements in current conditions.

- *Implementation and Financing*: While, according to the *Global Plan of Action*, the main responsibility for implementation rests with national governments, the *Global Plan of Action* calls upon governments of developed countries to “attach due attention, including funding, to the implementation of activities within the Strategic Priority Areas of the *Global Plan of Action* through bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation.” “The

⁶ ITC-AnGR/07/Rep, Annex 2.

extent to which developing countries will effectively implement their commitments,” the *Global Plan of Action* states, “will depend on the effective provision of funding.” FAO should ensure “adequate regular programme support.” The Commission is requested to develop a Funding Strategy for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action* and to agree on modalities for the presentation of progress reports, as well as on criteria and parameters for the evaluation of the progress in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.

8. The *Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources*⁷ welcomes *The State of the World’s Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* as the “first comprehensive worldwide assessment of the state of animal genetic resources.” The *Interlaken Declaration* notes the significant ongoing loss of livestock breeds and calls for prompt action to conserve animal breeds at risk, due to the alarming rate of erosion in animal genetic resources. Governments acknowledge that maintaining the diversity of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture is essential to enable farmers, pastoralists and animal breeders to meet current and future production challenges resulting from changes in the environment, including climate change; to enhance resistance to diseases and parasites; and to respond to changes in consumer demand for animal products. The *Interlaken Declaration* identifies major gaps and weaknesses that exist in national and international capacities to inventory, monitor, characterize, sustainably use, develop and conserve animal genetic resources and acknowledges that the provision of new and additional resources can make a substantial difference in the world’s ability to address the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture.

9. The International Technical Conference recommended that its Chair present *The Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources* to the One Hundred and Thirty-third Session of FAO Council; the Thirty-fourth Session of the FAO Conference; and the second meeting of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; as well as to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development; and the Ninth Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the thirteenth meeting of the Convention’s Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

10. The Conference also requested the Director-General to transmit *The Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources* to all FAO Members, and recommended that FAO distribute it widely, including to all relevant international organizations.

C. THE ROAD AHEAD

11. The successful outcome of the International Technical Conference is a further milestone in the work of FAO and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The Interlaken instruments join *The State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* and the *Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, and lay the basis for a coherent overall approach to all sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

12. The outcomes of Interlaken provide a first internationally agreed basis for the characterization, inventory, monitoring, conservation, development and sustainable use of animal

⁷ ITC-AnGR/07/REP, *Annex I*.

genetic resources, which are increasingly at risk, and for sharing the benefits and responsibilities fairly and equitably. Animal genetic resources are of particular importance in a number of fragile and marginal environments, where they provide the mainstay of livelihoods. Climatic change both increases the risk of the loss of these resources, and increases their importance in adapting to climatic change, as well as in meeting the food security needs of a growing world population, and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goals 1 (*eradication of extreme poverty and hunger*) and 7 (*ensure environmental stability*). The task before the international community now is to translate the outcomes of Interlaken into concrete and sustainable action.

13. Through the Interlaken Declaration, the International Technical Conference acknowledged the essential role of FAO in supporting country-driven efforts in implementing the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*. It requested the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to monitor and oversee the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, within the context of its Multi-Year Programme of Work on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, in order to build systematically on the outcomes of the Interlaken Conference.

- At its Twelfth Session, in 2009, the Commission will consider follow-up to the Interlaken Conference.
- At its Fourteenth Session, it will review of implementation of the outcomes of the Interlaken Conference.
- At its Sixteenth Session, it will update *The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*.

14. In preparation for its Twelfth Session, the Commission has already requested its subsidiary Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to advise it on options for evaluating progress in the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, to suggest potential criteria and indicators to assess implementation progress, and to recommend the form and content of status and trends reports on animal genetic resources, as well as options for identifying breeds at risk. The Conference decided that the Commission receive from countries status and trends reports, in order to review progress and to further develop country-based early warning and response systems. In addition, the Commission will develop a Funding Strategy for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*.

15. The International Technical Conference has stressed that FAO should ensure adequate regular programme support for the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, and requested FAO to pursue, within relevant mechanisms, funds and bodies, means by which they might contribute to the implementation of the *Global Plan of Action*. Presentation of the *Global Plan of Action* within these institutions as well as regular reporting on its implementation will be appropriate instruments in this context.

16. The main responsibility for implementing the *Global Plan of Action* rests with national governments. Countries should make every effort to provide, in accordance with their capacities, support with respect to national strategic priorities that are intended to achieve the objectives of the *Global Plan of Action*. Governments should take the necessary and appropriate measures within relevant international mechanisms, funds, and bodies to ensure due priority and attention to the effective allocation of predictable and agreed resources for the implementation of activities within the Strategic Priority Areas of the *Global Plan of Action*. Governments of developed countries should attach due attention, including funding, to the implementation of activities within

the Strategic Priority Areas of the *Global Plan of Action*, through bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. Governments of developing countries and countries with economies in transition should accord due priority in their own plans and programmes to building capacity in animal genetic resources.

17. The Council may wish to recommend to the Conference that it:

- Reiterate the essential roles and values of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture, in particular their contribution to food security for present and future generations, and the threats to food security and sustainable livelihoods posed by the loss and erosion of these resources;
- Endorse the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, the *Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources* and the Multi-year Programme of Work of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, through which FAO Members will guide its implementation;
- Stress the importance of fully implementing the *Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources*, in order to achieve Millennium Development Goals 1 and 7;
- Appeal to donors and to relevant international mechanisms, funds, and bodies to ensure due priority and attention to the effective allocation of predictable and agreed resources for the implementation of activities within the Strategic Priority Areas of the *Global Plan of Action*;
- Thank Switzerland for presenting the outcomes of the Interlaken International Technical Conference to this Council and the forthcoming Conference of FAO, and to other relevant international organizations and bodies, including the Second Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; as well as to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development; the thirteenth meeting of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Ninth Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Warmly thank Switzerland for having hosted the International Technical Conference, and the countries that contributed towards this, including in order to make possible the participation of developing countries.