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Developments in Fora of Importance for the Mandate of FAO

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1. This item has been added to the Agenda in response to Action 2.31 of the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA), to ensure that the Council is kept abreast of developments in other fora of importance for FAO's mandate and that dialogue is maintained with other Governing Bodies as appropriate, in particular the Governing Bodies of the United Nations Rome-based food and agriculture agencies.

I. Decision of the Forty-first session of the United Nations Statistical Commission on agricultural statistics

2. Following the support expressed by the Thirty-sixth Session of the FAO Conference (November 2009) for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics¹, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) endorsed the technical content and strategic directions of the Global Strategy at its Forty-first session held in New York in February 2010. Furthermore, the UNSC urged FAO and the Friends of the Chair of the Commission on Agricultural Statistics to expedite the development of the Implementation Plan aimed at strengthening the national agricultural statistical system, taking the necessary steps to develop the master sample frame, the integrated survey framework and the data management system.

3. Developing the Implementation Plan of this Global Strategy is a priority for the FAO Statistics Division in 2010. It is expected that the Implementation Plan will include a comprehensive technical assistance programme, an articulated training programme and a well targeted research agenda, as well as clear indications on management of funds and governance arrangements at the global, regional and national levels. The Implementation Plan will pay particular attention to: (i) integration of agricultural and rural statistics into the national statistical system; (ii) coordination between national statistical offices and Ministries of Agriculture through effective governance mechanisms; (iii) integration of agricultural statistics with other statistical domains, including macro-economic statistics and national accounts; and (iv) level of statistical development of countries for the purpose of the technical assistance programme.

4. Partnership is crucial in this undertaking. In addition to the UNSC Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics, the Statistics Division will closely cooperate with: (i) other statistics units of FAO, including fisheries, forestry and natural resources; (ii) development partners, such as the World Bank, the Statistics Office of the European Commission (EUROSTAT), the African Development Bank, the United States Department of Agriculture and other donor countries; and (iii) all member countries. The Implementation Plan will be the main theme of the Fifth International Conference on Agricultural Statistics in Kampala, Uganda, in October 2010.

II. Involvement of CITES (Washington Convention) in the conservation of commercially-exploited marine fish: the Results of COP-15

5. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement established with the objective of protecting and conserving endangered species by ensuring that their survival is not threatened by international trade. Species are listed in one of three Appendices, and international trade in these species is controlled according to the degree of protection required. Since 2004, a FAO Expert Advisory Panel has been providing scientific advice on proposals to list commercially-exploited aquatic species in the Appendices of CITES. In December 2009, the third Expert Advisory Panel met to review six proposals to ban or restrict international trade in a number of shark species, Atlantic bluefin tuna and Red and Pink corals. The 2009 Panel recommended that five shark species (Oceanic whitetip shark, Porbeagle and Scalloped hammerhead shark, and two "look-alike" species) had fulfilled the

¹ C 2009/REP paras 49-56

CITES listing criteria for Appendix II. In the case of Atlantic bluefin tuna, the Panel's recommendation was not unanimous, but a majority found that the criteria for an Appendix I listing were met. An Appendix I listing would result in a ban in international trade, including fishing on the high seas, for the species. For the remaining two proposals on Spiny dogfish and Red and Pink corals, the Panel concluded that these did not meet the criteria and should not be listed by CITES. At the 15th CITES Conference of the Parties (COP-15) in March 2010, the scientific conclusions of the FAO Panel were widely acknowledged; even so, none of these proposals achieved the two thirds majority required for adoption. The main arguments contributing to this result were that CITES might not be the right instrument for regulating commercially exploited aquatic species and that they should rather be managed by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) or under the auspices of FAO.

6. As explained in the last Council Session (CL 137/INF/7) the CITES Secretariat has repeatedly challenged the view of FAO that international trade restrictions imposed by CITES for commercially-exploited aquatic species should be based on scientific assessment using the defined and objective criteria agreed by FAO and CITES in 2004. Instead, the CITES Secretariat advocates less rigorous and largely undefined methods for assessing whether or not international trade of a commercially-exploited aquatic species should be restricted by listing the species in one of the CITES Appendices. Consequently, in several cases where the FAO Panel did not recommend a CITES listing, the CITES Secretariat issued the opposite recommendation to its Parties. In response to this problem, COP-15 established an internal process, in which FAO will be requested to participate, in order to develop guidance on the application of controversial criterion for consideration at the next COP. Another issue of relevance to FAO are the discussions within CITES on the clarification of the role and responsibilities of flag states and port states with regard to species listed by CITES and caught in international waters ('introduction from the sea'). No agreement could be reached at COP-15 on this matter and it was decided to extend the term of an intersessional working group established at the 57th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee to clarify the issue. FAO was requested to participate in the working group.

7. COP-15 emphasized the leading role of FAO and RFMOs regarding the conservation and management of commercially-exploited aquatic species. In this context, the FAO Secretariat will strengthen its efforts to facilitate greater progress in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the associated International Plans of Action and intends to continue its cooperation with CITES as foreseen by the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations.

III. Intergovernmental processes and inter-agency cooperation in the United Nations General Assembly

8. FAO closely monitored the intergovernmental consultations of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on System Wide Coherence and participated in related United Nations Agency processes regarding particularly: (i) Governance and the roles of Governing Bodies; (ii) discussion on the merge of the Common Country Programmes and Delivery as One; (iii) strengthening of funding for operational activities and resource mobilization; and (iv) support for the creation of the Composite Gender Entity.

Rome-based Agency Collaboration

9. In response to calls from the Governing Bodies of the three Rome-based agencies to further strengthen strategic and programmatic partnerships, a forward-looking strategy document over a two-year period entitled "Directions for Collaboration of the Rome-Based Food Agencies" was developed. The document draws on the respective comparative advantages of the three agencies in working together with the goal of ensuring food security and sustainable agriculture.

10. In particular, the Rome-based agencies agree that collaboration should be pursued in the context of United Nations system-wide coherence in support of country-driven efforts and aligned

with country priorities. A common long-term strategic framework for strengthening collaboration has been developed in the following areas:

- **Joint communication plan** for 2010 linking to the MDGs and Food Security;
- **Countries in transition from relief to development;**
- Collaboration on **Early Warning and Food Security information.**

IV. e-Agriculture: enhancing the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in rural development and food security

11. FAO considers ICT a critical part of rural development, information management, and capacity development. At the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in Tunisia from 16 to 18 November 2005, the Organization accepted responsibility for Action Line "C.7 e-Agriculture". E-Agriculture is an emerging field focusing on the enhancement of agricultural and rural development through improved ICT processes. In 2007, FAO, IFAD and CGIAR launched the e-Agriculture Community of Practice to enhance the role of ICT in agricultural development and food security. Now, with over 6,000 members from more than 150 countries, the Community is active on three levels: a knowledge sharing web-portal; face-to-face events; and in-country interventions. In 2009, FAO, IFAD and WFP organized several e-Agriculture events, including an interactive session about the use of mobile communication for knowledge exchange in support of livelihoods, virtual forums on "Mobile Telephony in Rural Areas" (in English and in Spanish) and on "The Role of ICT in Agricultural Value Chains"

Creation of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services

12. The participants of the 15th Neuchâtel Initiative Meeting organized by FAO in Assisi, Italy, in September 2009, declared their determination to create a global forum that provides leadership and advocacy regarding advisory services. The inception period of the Global Forum on Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) began on 1 January 2010 with financial support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and the European Union (EU). During this inception phase of 18 months, a five year programme will be developed. GFRAS has an open structure with no formal membership, is governed by a Steering Committee and managed by a Secretariat currently located at the Swiss Association for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas (Agridea) in Lindau, Switzerland. Its leadership and advocacy focuses at the global and policy level to provide a voice, enable dialogue, and promote a supportive environment for advisory services. At the thematic level, GFRAS enables interaction and networking to strengthen individual and institutional capabilities in advisory services, and aims to support the development and synthesis of approaches and policies that improve the effectiveness of rural and agricultural services.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research

13. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) is a multi-stakeholder-led initiative that serves as an open and inclusive forum for dialogue and action on strategic issues in agricultural research for development. GFAR is formally established through the co-sponsorship of FAO and IFAD and is administered as a multi-donor Trust Fund project, independently governed by a multi-stakeholder Steering Committee.

14. In 2009, GFAR's vital role was recognized in the G8 L'Aquila Statement on Food Security: "we support the fundamental reform processes underway in the FAO, the Committee on World Food Security, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the global agricultural research system through the Global Forum on Agricultural Research".

15. In March 2010, GFAR organized the first Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development, in association with the CGIAR (itself an important constituency of GFAR) and the Government of France, which set out a clear agenda for transforming agricultural research systems around the world, to increase their relevance, impact and value towards meeting development objectives. The GCARD found common agreement on the need for reform and strengthening of research systems globally through a new strategic approach.

V. United National Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations on climate change

16. The outcome of climate change negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009, was not a legally-binding instrument as had been foreseen, but a political statement called the Copenhagen Accord. The Accord was noted, but not adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its Sixteenth session. At the same time, the COP and the Governing Body of the Kyoto Protocol decided to extend the mandates of the ad hoc working groups attempting to negotiate a legally-binding instrument. Implementation of the Accord and further negotiation under the ad hoc working groups raise some uncertainty on how the two processes relate to each other or may eventually be merged.

17. The Accord assigns *inter alia* a central role to Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), but makes no mention of agriculture or food security. In the Accord, financing for climate change adaptation and mitigation received a commitment by developed countries to provide USD30 billion from 2010 to 2012 (fast start) and the goal to achieve financing of USD100 billion per year by 2020. The Accord indicated that a high-level panel will be established under the guidance of, and accountable to, the COP to study the contribution of the potential sources of revenue, including alternative sources of finance. In this regard, the United Nations Secretary-General has established a high-level advisory group, chaired by the Heads of Government of the United Kingdom and Ethiopia, with participation of other members including Heads of State and Government, high-level officials from Ministries and central banks, as well as experts on public finance, development and related issues. This group will deliver its report shortly before COP-16 in Mexico in December 2010.

18. The Accord also asked developed countries to submit quantified economy-wide emissions targets for 2020, and developing countries to submit proposed mitigation actions. As of 10 March 2010, 14 Annex I Parties, plus the 27 member countries of the EU and 32 Non Annex I countries had replied. Only two developed countries clarified that pledged emission reductions are based on the assumption that an effective set of Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) rules are approved. Among the 32 submissions received from developing countries, 7 are not sector specific and 13 indicated that they plan to adopt mitigation actions in the agricultural sector, noting that agriculture could potentially be a key component of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) in developing countries.

19. Prior to the Copenhagen Conference, under the UNFCCC working group process, a dedicated drafting group was established to negotiate text on “Cooperative sectoral approaches and sector-specific actions”, under mitigation. Agriculture and transport sectors were the focus of this drafting group, with a separate group on agriculture eventually established. No formal action was taken on this text in Copenhagen, which included a proposal to establish a Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) work programme on agriculture. Such work programme could allow more in-depth discussion on how agriculture mitigation and mitigation-adaptation synergies might be implemented and supported. As this proposal was not opposed in Copenhagen, the SBSTA in June 2010 could decide to establish such a programme, or a decision in this regard could be deferred to the Mexico COP in December 2010.

20. It is widely recognized that FAO advocacy and technical support activities in the context of the negotiations helped to showcase that agriculture is affected by and affects climate change

and consequently needs to be part of an internationally-agreed solution to this challenge, which will need to be pursued in tandem with, rather than in isolation from, food security. More detailed information is provided in document COAG/INF/7 “Climate Change Negotiations at Copenhagen and beyond”.

VI. FAO’s participation in the relevant conferences/meetings on South-South Cooperation

United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (1-3 December 2009, Nairobi)

21. The United Nations-sponsored High-Level Conference consisted of plenary meetings around the theme of “Promotion of South-South Cooperation for Development”. FAO participated in a roundtable on "Strengthening the Role of the United Nations System in South-South Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities" which was an opportunity to share FAO’s South-South Cooperation (SSC) experiences with other United Nations agencies and member countries, within the broad framework of FAO’s food security programmes (SPFS/NPFS/RPFS). The uniqueness of the FAO experience within the United Nations SSC framework was acknowledged.

16th High Level Committee Meeting on South-South Cooperation and United Nations Inter-Agency meeting on South-South Cooperation (4-5 February 2010, New York)

22. The High-Level one day meeting was organized by the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Special Unit on South-South Cooperation as a follow-up to the Nairobi Conference and participants were mostly at the Permanent Representative level. United Nations agencies, including FAO, participated in an observer capacity. The following day, a United Nations Inter-Agency meeting was organized to discuss ways and means of implementing the High-Level Committee decisions. FAO participated and explained the FAO SSC experience which was considered as a useful example for other United Nations Agencies. A particular reference was made to the use of the Tripartite Agreement as a means of implementation of South-South Cooperation.

FAO’s active role in the Food Security Theme Groups (FAO/WFP/IFAD)

23. FAO takes part in the Rome-based UN agencies efforts to coordinate their food security activities, with rotating meetings.

VII. Developments under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing

24. Achieving food security for all is at the heart of all FAO activities. As climate change will be one of the major challenges for agricultural production and world food security, the Treaty is of major relevance in addressing the challenge of adaptation to climate change. The Treaty provides a unique policy instrument to enhance the breeding of varieties adapted to altered conditions by facilitating access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture under the Treaty’s Multilateral System, including through support to projects by the Benefit-Sharing Fund established under the Funding Strategy of the Treaty. Rapid progress has been made in the operation of the Multilateral System of the Treaty: (a) more than 1 million accessions of genetic material have already been included in the Multilateral System; (b) more than 600 transfers of genetic material occur every day in the Multilateral System using the ‘Standard Material Transfer Agreement’ (SMTA); (c) the information technology systems to manage this information are currently being set up; (d) the Multilateral System has become fully operational by the financing of the first 11 projects from the Benefit-Sharing Trust Fund, with the priority of adapting to

climate change; and (e) voluntary funds for the implementation of the Funding Strategy have been provided in the 2008-2009 biennium by Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain and Switzerland.

Third Party Beneficiary under the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA)

25. The Third Session of the Governing Body of the Treaty, by Resolution 5/2009, adopted the *Procedures for the Operation of the Third Party Beneficiary*, and thanked “the Director-General of FAO for having agreed in principle that FAO shall act as the Third Party Beneficiary, and requests him to bring these procedures to the attention of the relevant bodies of FAO, for formal approval”. As requested and in accordance with the FAO Basic Texts, the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) and the FAO Council examined the Third Party Beneficiary (TPB) Procedures as approved by the Governing Body of the Treaty, together with related amendments to the Treaty’s Financial Rules. The CCLM underlined that this mechanism provides an example of useful synergies between FAO and bodies established under Article XIV of the Constitution. The Council confirmed the decision of the CCLM and approved the TPB Procedures, which are now to be considered as fully operational.