



Outcomes of the High Level Round Table

Moderator's summary

We have heard speakers today from many countries at the highest level, and my task now is to identify the main shared conclusions that are the outcome of this meeting.

In the first place, I must record that all countries have recognized and expressed their gratitude for the very generous support of the Government of Italy for the Treaty and its many functions.

The presence here today of sixty countries, with many delegations led by Ministers or Vice-Ministers, shows the huge importance that countries from all continents, both developing and developed, give to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Fully sixty of 126 Contracting parties are present. The speakers have made repeated and emphatic statements of the crucial role of the Treaty:

- The effective exchange and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture is the bedrock of food security. Without access to the genetics of the world's key crops, and their continual exchange and improvement, we cannot hope to feed the nine billion people who will inhabit the planet at the middle of this century. Already almost a billion go to bed hungry each day.
- Climate change, at the same time as it increases the risk of loss of these resources, makes them ever more important in addressing climate change. This is the paradox that the Treaty addresses.
- The Treaty, through its Benefit-sharing Fund, must be clearly linked to the utilization of the extremely valuable plant genetic resources that are contained in the Treaty's Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, in the context of assisting small-scale farmers to adapt to climate change.

We have also heard that the operational systems of the Treaty, in particular the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing, are now up and running. Contracting Parties have made a large strategic investment in the Treaty, and need to continue to supply the resources needed to use their investment optimally. A number of countries have stressed the need to fund the Treaty's Core Administrative Budget adequately.

Now that the systems are operative, it is important that all Contracting Parties resolve any administrative bottlenecks that may still remain in making their relevant plant genetic resources available through the Multilateral System.

You have also noted that your Treaty has been formally recognised as one of the constituent pillars within the major new International Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing that was concluded in Nagoya in October. Your meeting here today is the first major international forum since the adoption of the Protocol. The Treaty was, in fact, the first fully functioning international agreement for access and benefit-sharing, and regulates these matters for the plant genetic resources for food and agriculture on which agriculture depends. It is crucial for food security and poverty reduction. All

efforts of the Treaty, as Contracting Parties here today have recognised, now need to focus on maintaining and ensuring the space to operate that the Treaty needs, as the Protocol is put into operation.

As discussed here, the Treaty's benefit-sharing fund has grown most promisingly over the past eighteen months, and has been recognised by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as an international adaptation-financing mechanism. It is targeting, as a priority, assistance to small-scale farmers, so that they may adapt their production systems to dislocations arising from climate change. This initiative is called "Leading the Field". It aims to help farmers stay ahead of the climate change curve, through the utilisation of the plant genetic resources overseen by the Treaty. In this, the Treaty is in the forefront of addressing international priorities in a coherent, effective manner.

In the last year, some US\$ 12 million have been committed, and US\$ 10 will be invested at the next Governing Body in high-impact projects supporting small-holder farmers in developing countries. This is a great success, but requests were received for more than 400 projects, for a total value of US\$ 100 million, of which less than 10% can be funded. The next meeting of the Governing Body, in Bali, Indonesia, in March, will be a milestone. It provides an opportunity to Contracting Parties to work together to put this initiative on a sustainable long-term footing, directly and effectively supporting small-holder farmers in some of the world's poorest regions.

Many speakers have stressed that the Treaty needs better communication, outreach and public relations. This is important both to give it recognition and public space, but also to support the mobilization of funds for the Benefit-sharing Fund, from a wide and innovative range of possible sources.

The High-level Round Table was informed that his Excellency Giancarlo Galan, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies of the Government of Italy, would present the outcomes of discussions today to the Ministerial Conference that the Government of Indonesia would be convening, at the time of the forthcoming session of the Governing Body, in March 2010, in Bali, Indonesia.

