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COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS TO THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. As the work of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission) proceeds, the number of topics and sectors the Commission covers continues to grow. National Focal Points/ Coordinators continue to contribute to the work of the Commission in the different sectors of genetic resources for food and agriculture and to the implementation of its action plans and guidance documents. In fact, the work of National Focal Points/ Coordinators significantly contributes to the achievement of the Commission's major outputs and milestones set out in its Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW). Recently, National Focal Points (NFPs) have also been established for the preparation of Country Reports for *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*.¹

2. This document discusses the possibility of establishing a network of NFPs for the Commission with a view to strengthen coordination and collaboration among the Commission Members and to improve communication channels between Members and FAO, including the Commission Secretariat.

II. NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS TO THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

3. Presently, NFPs exist in relation to specific sectors of genetic resources and specific tasks, such as the preparation of country reports contributing to the State of the World reports, the monitoring of Global Plans of Action, and the updating and maintaining of sectoral databases.

4. Over the last few years, the body of work of the Commission has grown in both amount and complexity. The adoption of a ten-year cycle for the production of the sectoral global assessments and of the cross-sectoral *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, the regular review and updating of relevant policy instruments, the increasing emphasis on cross-sectoral matters – all these activities require increased efforts of Commission Members to contribute to the different sectoral and cross-sectoral matters and to coordinate their contributions at national and sometimes regional level.

5. NFPs to the Commission could play an important role in *inter alia*:

- receiving and disseminating information related to the Commission's work;
- support the identification of representatives from their countries in meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies;
- support the identification of experts to participate in *ad hoc* formal and informal meetings, workshops, review processes and other initiatives led by the Commission;
- coordinate submissions of their countries to the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, such as comments on a draft state of the world reports;
- respond to requests for inputs by Members from the Commission, such as the request to report on use and exchange practises regarding genetic resources for food and agriculture;
- collaborate with and coordinate, as appropriate, existing NFPs for the different sectors of genetic resources, or responsible for specific tasks or the NFP for *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*; and
- collaborate and exchange information and experiences with NFPs of other members and of other processes and institutions.

6. NFPs to the Commission could become the authorized recipients for information and communications sent out by the Secretariat and they could be tasked with the circulation of such information to the proper national entities and stakeholders. Sectoral focal points/ national coordinators would of course continue to work on the basis of existing terms of reference and practises. However, information as well as requests for information regarding cross-sectoral matters, such as climate change and access and benefit-sharing, would be sent by the Commission Secretariat

¹ <http://www.fao.org/nr/cgrfa/biodiversity/nationalfocalpoints/en/>

directly to the NFPs to the Commission. The NFP to the Commission would then have the task of ensuring that relevant ministries, departments, agencies, or stakeholder groups receive the relevant information, to collect and compile, as applicable, such information and feedback from relevant stakeholders and to communicate the information to the Commission Secretariat.

7. Commission NFPs would be regularly informed of the schedule and the agenda of Commission meetings, including meetings of the Commission's Bureau, its intergovernmental technical working groups and any other subsidiary bodies the Commission may wish to establish. NFPs may also assist governments, as appropriate, in the identification of delegates, experts or other participants for relevant meetings.

8. Commission NFPs could also be requested to initiate national consultations prior to meetings of the Commission and could support and facilitate the work of the members of the Bureau by ensuring the two-way flow of information between the national and the regional level.

9. Commission NFPs could also collaborate at national and regional level with other NFPs of other instruments or bodies, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. Such collaboration among focal points may contribute to policy coherence and consistency, help to avoid duplication of work and ensure proper information exchange.

III. GUIDANCE SOUGHT

10. The Commission may wish to:

- i. Acknowledge the important role of sectoral NFPs in the implementation of the Commission's MYPOW and in ensuring the achievement of major outputs and milestones as set out in the MYPOW;
- ii. Recognize the need for establishing a network of NFPs to the Commission;
- iii. Review and revise, as necessary, the terms of reference for the NFPs to the Commission, as given in *Appendix I*, with a view to endorse them; and
- iv. Invite Members to nominate NFPs to the Commission with terms of reference, as endorsed by the Commission.

APPENDIX I

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS TO THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Recognizing that Commission Members identify their National Focal Points to the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and determine their specific responsibilities, the primary function of National Focal Points to the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is to act as liaisons with the Secretary of the Commission on behalf of their Members and in so doing, they are responsible for:

- (i) Coordinating with and strengthening the collaboration of National Focal Points designated for specific tasks of the Commission;
- (ii) Ensuring that relevant institutions in their country are timely informed of dates and agendas of upcoming Commission meetings;
- (iii) Supporting, as appropriate, identification of experts and stakeholders to participate in meetings, consultations and assessment processes initiated by the Commission;
- (iv) Receiving information related to the Commission and disseminating it to the relevant institutional actors such as ministry offices, experts, stakeholders, indigenous people and local communities and others, as appropriate;
- (v) Responding to requests for input from the Commission and its Secretary including through, as appropriate, coordinating a joint reply with relevant experts or institutions;
- (vi) Initiate and coordinate, as appropriate, a consultation between relevant national stakeholders on preparatory documents for the Regular Sessions of the Commission;
- (vii) Provide support to Bureau Members to ensure a two-way flow of information between the national and the regional level on matters related to the Commission;
- (viii) Collaborating with National Focal Points in other countries to facilitate the work of the Commission and the implementation of instruments developed by the Commission;
- (ix) Collaborating and coordinating work with the Primary and other National Focal Points of the Convention on Biological Diversity², the National Focal Points of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture³ and other relevant national focal points; and
- (x) Support raising awareness at national level for the Commission's strategic goals and objectives.

² <https://www.cbd.int/information/nfp.shtml>

³ <http://www.planttreaty.org/nfp>